

STUDIO PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY of CHILDREN AND BABIES

Third Edition



MARILYN SHOLIN

Amherst Media®
PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to all my clients who let me into their lives and have shared their children and families with me. Your children are all a part of my family.

DEDICATION

This book is especially dedicated to the many people who are no longer with me. I know they are all reading the book "up there" and smiling down on me. I feel their presence.

This book is dedicated also to Michael, with love. I couldn't survive without your love and laughter to keep me sane.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo by Marilyn Sholin.

Marilyn's fascination with the visual arts started when she was a little girl and her two older brothers had a darkroom in the basement. She spent many hours there watching as her brothers created "magic" pictures that appeared in what looked like water in trays. Her fascination with the darkroom was enhanced at Halloween, when its eerie red light made the darkroom the best "fun house" on the block.

On her sixteenth birthday, the one gift Marilyn wanted most was her own camera. Her parents made her wish come true, and since then she has never looked back. The camera went with her everywhere, and the family counted on her to document all the family events. Her friends always knew they would be photographed when Marilyn was around.

Eventually, when Marilyn married and had children, she unpacked that old enlarger her brothers worked with and set up her own darkroom in her home. Now, it was her son who watched in amazement as the prints of him appeared in the trays of chemicals. She scrimped and saved and sold things at a flea market to buy her first top-of-the-line 35mm camera. With the first roll of film she put through it, Marilyn won a national Kodak contest and had her picture published in the newspapers. A natural? Good luck? Maybe years and years of learning to see and feel what transforms a good image into a great one.

Over the years, Marilyn's artistic style of portraiture has received international acclaim. Her award-winning photographs have been published in the Professional Photographers of America (PPA) Loan Book and in the Florida Professional Photographers Excellence Book. She is also a nationally recognized Certified Professional Photographer with a Master Craftsman degree, and Corel recognizes her as one of their small select group of Painter Masters.

Marilyn is a popular speaker at photographers' conventions where she presents programs on many topics, from "The Art of Creativity" to creating innovative family and children's portraits and turning them into art. Her speaking has taken her from coast to coast and worldwide. She also conducts workshops with hands-on experience for the attendees.

Marilyn's philosophy is that you must stay on top of the photographic industry and be ready to innovate quickly. Keep an open mind and always look to the future. She advises her seminar attendees and readers, "Be fearless."

INTRODUCTION

The joy of photographing children is in their innocence and spontaneous expressions. A glowing face or hug from one of our little people has brightened many gloomy days at the studio. Their expressions, captured in a fraction of a second, remain ingrained in our minds. Years later, they make us smile.

This book is for everyone who wants to learn how to photograph their clients or their own children better, more easily, and with more pizzazz than

The culmination of all your work behind the scenes is a memorable portrait that will be treasured for years to come.





A baby doesn't have to have a huge smile to show he's happy. This little guy is obviously comfortable, and his expression shows it.

**A little bit of child psychology
will help you in preparing for
each child's portrait session.**

before. In these pages, there are a number of tips for photographing children and having fun while doing it. After reading this book, you will find that everything about cameras and lighting that once looked so difficult is now clearer to you. The explanations are all presented in easy-to-understand terms that anyone can use to improve his or her photography.

A little bit of child psychology will help you in preparing for each child's portrait session. You will learn what to expect from each session (and you will especially appreciate when you meet the perfect child who goes against the norm and follows all your directions perfectly).

In chapter 1 there are tips for setting up an effective and efficient studio and camera room. There are ideas for what to do to create a friendly atmosphere that children will respond to, as creating kid-friendly environment is important for building your rapport with them.

Chapter 2 deals with the psychology of each age group that is photographed. Knowing what to expect from a newborn or a two-year-old will help you plan their portrait sessions. Having a few age-appropriate tricks up your sleeve for each subject will make things go smoothly.

Chapter 3 walks you through a typical portrait sitting—from conducting an effective clothing consultation to exactly what to expect during photog-



Don't overlook the possibility of shooting a few outdoor portraits to supplement your clients' studio portraits. With a shallow depth of field, you can blur out a less than perfect background and focus the viewer's attention on the subject.

raphy. It will help take away some of the mystery surrounding what happens during a portrait session.

In chapters 4 and 5, we'll discuss the right equipment for the job—the kinds of cameras, lenses, lights, and modifiers that are the bare minimum required to create beautiful studio portraits. In chapter 6, you'll learn some simple lighting strategies that will work well with your young clients.

No two people see and photograph the same subject the same way. In chapter 7, you'll learn how to cultivate your personal style in order to set your work apart from the competition. Chapter 8 serves as a crash course in using Corel Painter to amplify the artistry of your images, and in chapter 9, you'll learn how to use plug-ins to take those painted images to the next level.

Chapter 10 will give you insight into determining your target demographic and marketing your products to that select group. You'll discover simple strategies for developing your client base in little time, with little or no money. It will save you time and money by focusing on marketing techniques that work quickly. Chapters 11 and 12 will show you how to present your images to clients and how to put on your sales cap to ensure the best-possible profits from every session. You'll also take a look at some hot product ideas that will ensure that your clients purchase more than a traditional framed print. In chapter 13, you'll learn how to nurture your relationship with clients once they walk out of your studio so that you can make your customers clients for life.

If this sounds like a lot to cover in one book, it is. I can also assure you that reading it is worth your time. Before you even finish this book, you will be using it as your reference before every portrait sitting. While other books may tell you generalities about photographing children, this book teaches specific skills you can use immediately. As you conclude each chapter, you can close the book, and something will have been learned.

A good place to keep this book is by your camera. Hand in hand, the camera, lights, and information here will make a better photographer of you, whether you are a professional or amateur.

**Before you finish this book, you
will be using it as your reference
before every portrait sitting.**

1. THE CHILD-FRIENDLY STUDIO

A priceless expression is a surefire bet when creating images that capture parents' hearts. In this portrait, the soft background keeps the viewers attention right where we want it!

Children are people. As long as you can remember that, you will be fine. They are people without pretense or arrogance. They will always say what they mean and ask the most embarrassing questions at the most inappropriate times. They will make you laugh and touch your heart. Their tears will break your heart. But beware—these little folks can also try your patience, bring your equipment crashing to the floor, ruin your backgrounds, and generally torment you during the time they spend in your studio.



The ideas outlined in this chapter will help to create an environment that (at the very least) gives the photographer the best odds of controlling the portrait session.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Children have already had many experiences before they come through the door of your studio. They have been to pleasant and unpleasant places. You want them to identify your studio as a fun place to visit. It should be warm and friendly and, above all, not remind them of a doctor's office. They have probably been to their doctor's office more than any other place (except the mall), and they probably don't have fond memories of it. You are a new adult in their life and someone who has a personal interaction with them. They need to see you as a friend and as a fun adult who loves them no matter what they do.

Your Appearance. Your physical appearance should convey the impression that you are Mommy's friend—no suits or ties, or long dresses with fancy jewelry. Wearing casual, child-friendly clothing, jewelry, and comfortable shoes will create the impression that you are someone who has good intentions and wants to play with them. Get down on the floor with the children and interact.

Toys. Always have toys or books in your reception room that the children can expect to see every time they come into your studio. This will re-

A prop that children can climb on is a great addition to your studio. It can easily keep the little ones engaged while you look to take advantage of the great expressions that are sure to result.



It's easy to get great pictures of your young clients. Just let them be themselves and keep your eyes open for ways to highlight the unique personalities of your subjects.



It's a good idea to buy favorite toys in multiples to prevent fights between siblings.

inforce the idea that your studio is a fun place. They can look forward to playing again with a favorite toy there.

Kids love a toy car that they can climb into and are especially fond of one with a working horn. This gives even the smallest toddler something to climb on, and the older child something to get into and move around.

One of the most popular toys at our studio are the magic pen books where the pens create color on the pages but there is no ink or marker to make a mess. These books are also called “invisible ink” books and can be found in toy stores or on eBay. Crayola now has a number of these products for sale at toy departments and art stores. Their new Color Explosion line works only with their own paper, and the pen’s “ink” is clear, so there are no problems with messy crayons in the studio. Kids love these types of toys and can spend hours with them. It's a good idea to buy favorite toys in multiples to prevent fights between siblings.

Also popular are the books that make sounds and play music. They keep the children's attention and they come into the studio looking for their fa-



Who says you need to get an image of a child looking right at the lens with a grin in order to create a great portrait? If you're working with a camera-shy child, remember that candid photos can be just as beautiful as traditional posed ones. This tightly cropped image capitalizes on the little lady's perfect cheeks and lovely little lips. What parent could resist an image like this?

favorite one from the last visit. One tip is buy two of each book, but don't put the second one out. Wait until the first one no longer works or is too shopworn to be enjoyed.

Furnishings. Have a couple of child-sized chairs available for the kids to sit in. Seeing kid-friendly items in your reception room immediately sets it in children's minds that your studio is a place where they belong.

Overcoming Shyness. Keep in mind that some children are shy, and even the most child-friendly studio may not be enough to convince a meek child to warm up right away. When working with shy children, get down on their level and continue to talk to their mom—maybe while holding an appealing book or toy in your hands. Eventually their curiosity will take over, and they will get closer and closer to you. Once you can make a connection (talking to them or reading a book), you can proceed to let them get ready to be photographed. The time you spend in your front room getting the children warmed up to you will cut down on the time you need to spend in the camera room trying to get good expressions.

A child-friendly studio may not be enough to convince a meek child to warm up right away.

YOUR CAMERA ROOM

Never let an unattended child walk into your camera room. This sounds simple, but in the hectic moments of preparing for a sitting, it can happen. Always be in the room and prepared for the first setup you are shooting. Have Mom bring the child(ren) in, and don't let them wander. Immediately bring the kids to the spot you want them in for the portraits. Let Mom stay just off to the side of the set to start out. Then she can move to the chair next to the camera once you see things are going well.



Above—There's no denying that making your young clients comfortable and ensuring that their session is an upbeat and fun-filled experience will pay dividends. **Right**—Sometimes you need to work fast to capture a great image before the child runs off of the backdrop. In this shot, the child's position allowed me to let the background fall out of focus.





**Keep talking about what you will
do next and how much more fun
you are going to have together.**

It is important that you maintain control of the children in the camera room. They must understand that they should remain situated in the set. It is just as important to be sure that Mom isn't wandering around the camera room picking up age-inappropriate props to use for the sitting. Give Mom the job of sitting in the chair. Have "Please Do Not Touch Props" signs posted wherever your props are stored. The parents won't always abide by the rule, but it will help to discourage them.

When you finish with each setup, tell the child to go directly to Mom and sit with her in a chair to wait for the next one. Keep talking about what you will do next and how much more fun you are going to have together. Throughout the shoot, it is important to keep your interaction going with the child. Psychologically, you are keeping them bound to you and listening to you.

CONCLUSION

Your studio, reception area, and camera room should be places children want to return to. They should also be places where parents can comfortably spend

Facing page—Developing a relationship with the older children and taking a genuine interest in their lives can help you elicit the expressions you're after in your images. With its delicate femininity combined with an edgy backdrop, this image appeals to both kids and parents. **Right**—It's important to be aware of how the children interact when not being photographed. I saw the boys do this in the reception room and, at the proper moment, asked them to do it in the camera room. Their expressions are wonderful, and the portrait is a natural image of how they interact with each other.



time with their children. There should be no fear that they might break something or handle things they shouldn't. The props should be inviting but somewhat hidden so they never know what you will bring out next. Maintaining the element of surprise will help you to build interest in what is coming next. All of this will assist you in maintaining control of your studio and camera room.

THE DRESSING ROOM

The studio dressing room should be parent friendly. If they have forgotten (or just didn't think to bring) certain items, you should have them ready. Having these items on hand will make your life easier:

- clean combs
- baby hairbrush
- regular hairbrushes
- hair spray and hair gel
- nail polish remover (Little girls often have chipped polish on their nails.)
- cotton balls
- cotton swabs for sensitive areas near the eyes that need cleaning
- wet wipes
- at least three different tones of concealer for black and blue marks and insect bites
- hair elastics in different colors
- bobby pins
- safety pins
- scissors to cut tags off new clothes
- hair dryer
- curling iron
- lipsticks in neutral and pink tones to add a little color
- lip glosses in natural and pink for dry lips
- petroleum jelly for stray eyebrows or hairs
- numbing gel for teething gums (This is a lifesaver.)
- steamer for clothes
- diapers in a few sizes
- tissues
- stain remover wipes to remove spots on clothing (Use a hair dryer to dry clothing.)
- child toothbrushes and dental floss
- child's two-step stool for them to use in the bathroom
- a tall director's chair (helps to raise children to comb their hair)

2. WHO'S THE BOSS HERE?

Notice how the weave in the blanket matches the weave in the baby's outfit. Good planning results in memorable portraits. The baby's hands, held together, help keep your eyes on his face.

Photographing children and babies requires some basic knowledge of child psychology and the various developmental stages. Working with each age group has its own set of pros and cons. Your job is to know what to expect at each age and to have an arsenal of tricks up your sleeve to deal with any obstacles.





NEWBORN TO SIX MONTHS

When photographing infants, plan enough time to accommodate their specific needs. Allow time for Mom to walk the baby around a bit, talk to, and soothe him or her. Alternatively, you might take a turn: new mothers are usually very tense about their baby being cranky when they are expecting magnificent portraits. Babies pick up on this stress. You can send warm, calm vibes to the baby by holding and soothing him or her. Keep your cool when an infant is crying and cranky. Remember, you only need a brief time span to accomplish your task. The important issue is to have a comfortable and happy baby.

When photographing infants, make use of a posing pillow that is designed to prop the baby up. This prevents them from sliding down into a position that makes their faces fall to their chins. This can make them look rounder than they are. These pillows can be draped with soft fabrics that match the baby's skin tones or clothing. Coordinating these two elements creates a portrait that is pleasing to the eye.

Above and facing page—Always allow enough time during the session for Mom to feed and soothe baby. Also, check with Mom to try to schedule an appointment time that doesn't interfere with their set schedule.



At this young age, a baby will respond to the sound of a rattle. The trick to getting his attention is not to start shaking the rattle in front of his or her face. Shake the rattle near the ear you want the baby to turn their head toward. If you shake it by the left ear, he or she will turn toward that sound, and you can then have the baby focus on the rattle in front of his or her face. The sound of Mom's voice will also cause the baby to smile. Be sure to have Mom at least 24 inches away from the baby's face. Otherwise, he or she won't be able to focus. Remember, infants cannot focus on anything that is too close or too far away.

At approximately four months, a baby will lift their head high when placed on their tummy. This pose can yield charming nude portraits. Watch for babies that roll over early, though. Keep Mom or an assistant nearby at all times so someone can jump in and gently move a wiggly baby back into position. A small pillow under a baby's chest can help them pick up their head better. Also, be sure to watch that their little arms don't get caught under their

Right—No doubt about this being a boy! Photographing from an angle looking down at him will feel natural for the parents who see him in this position often. It's also a natural for him to be looking up and smiling from this angle. **Below and facing page**—Sometimes some pretty props and a great expression are all you need to capture a great image.





body. Gently bring the baby's arms out from under his body and put his hands in front of him so he can push himself up easily.

At the age of five to six months, a baby will either begin sitting up in a propped position or sitting up by himself. This begins a particularly easy age to photograph infants. At this stage, it is essential that you have preplanned the way you will be photographing the baby. This will allow you to move through the sets and props quickly and efficiently. Though babies at this age are charming and interested in everything, their moods can also take a sudden turn for the worse. Instantly, they can become tired and hungry. Don't overplan the session when photographing this age group. Expect to photograph (at the most) three different settings or clothing changes, and quickly



Facing page—Sometimes the simplest props are best. This baby's mom brought her own chair and blanket, and the baby naturally went to pull up on it. Calling her name made her turn her head at just the right moment.



Adding bright-red apples to this white on white image added some visual interest to the portrait and, as an added bonus, kept baby entertained.

move through them. Using small feathers to tickle the baby's arms, legs, and under his or her chin will help get charming expressions.

SEVEN MONTHS TO THIRTEEN MONTHS

This age starts out easy. At seven months, a baby is sitting up and can hold items and reach for them. Sitting the baby down with preplanned items or on a special set works nicely. Beads are particularly interesting to a baby. Yes,

they will put them in their mouths, so be sure they are clean. Be ready to pull the hands with the beads down from the baby's face and capture that magical expression. Hats are also great props for this age group. Floral or straw hats look wonderful on girls, and baseball caps or sailor hats are charming on boys. The hat helps to frame the child's face and adds an effect of hair that most children do not yet have at this age.

Eight months is also when babies start to clap their hands and play pat-a-cake. They love to imitate whatever you are doing. Give them a stuffed animal and hold one yourself and show them how to hug the toy—many times they will imitate you with the one in their arms.

By about ten months, babies are standing up while holding on to a support. A good solid chair or ladder is excellent for this. While they are not walking yet, you can use their relative immobility to your advantage to keep the baby in one place and get great expressions. Babies of this age are also interested in things they can pick up with their fingers. Put a few pieces of fake fruit or little cars on a ladder or chair and direct the baby's attention to them; their automatic reaction is to reach for the items.

This is one smart cookie—and with her cookie dough and rolling pin, this one-year-old makes a pretty picture.





A delightful mess for a first birthday portrait! Notice the mirror on the floor. This added more color to the portrait by reflecting the cake and giving the floor a soft watercolor feeling.

Another method to capture expressions for this age is to sing songs that they are familiar with. The best songs are those that will encourage the baby to clap or bring their hands together. These portraits are delightful as they show the baby's developmental progress and ability to interact.

Games of peek-a-boo still work great for this age, also. Hiding just behind your camera and popping your head up will delight baby, and you will be rewarded with some great expressions. At this age, babies also like to see Mommy or Daddy doing silly things. Utilize Mommy by having her stand next to the camera (be sure she is standing up and not crouching down to baby's level). This keeps the baby's eyes up and gives more color and shape to their eyes.

FOURTEEN MONTHS TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS

Watch out! This age is one of the most difficult to document. Babies are walking, talking, and exerting their independence. To engage toddlers in this age range, try a game of rolling the ball back and forth with Mom. At



Facing page—When they're a little unsteady on their feet, toddlers often perch on a steady prop. This chair serves both as a support and a decorative element in this great image.

Your expression and demeanor will tell the baby that this is a fun time and not to worry about anything.

this age, some babies will respond well to directions. Try asking them to sit down or climb the ladder. Portraits of a toddler climbing into a chair are charming. Their usual method is to put a knee on the chair first and lift themselves up and then turn around. Don't help them, but keep Mom in place just off-camera to help if they get tangled or frustrated.

The tickle feather works especially well at this age. It's important to remember never to put the feather into the baby's face first. Tickle their feet, arms, or Mommy first. Then, lastly, tickle under the baby's chin or on the baby's cheek. Be gentle and reinforce the fun of it by saying, "tickle, tickle!"—words familiar to them as part of play. Your expression and demeanor will tell the baby that this is a fun time and not to worry about anything.

Portraits of babies walking at this age are great. Usually, they have the gait of a monster with both hands out as they fall heavily from one foot to the other. This makes for an unforgettable image! You can have them walk to Mommy, then go back to the chair and sit down and do it again. At this age, you can repeat this process about four or five times before they get bored with the whole game.

NINETEEN MONTHS TO THREE YEARS

Though this age is a challenge, the children can be easily engaged. The young ones are talking and responsive and can be entertained by a wide variety of objects. Put a penny in their hand and have them hide it—or have them put it in a pocket. Delightful portraits can be created while the child



A simple backdrop, a serious expression, and a few unique toys can go a long way in helping you create a memorable portrait.



Facing page and right—These location shots show an active little boy engaged in his surroundings. Consult with your client to see if they have a particular locale in mind. Selecting a location that is meaningful to your client can result in an increase in profits.



finds his pocket and opens it and puts the penny in it, and then has a great expression of accomplishment.

Children also love riding toys at this age. The trick is to put a flat wooden bar under the wheels on the side of the toy that is away from the camera—then the wheels won't move. Rocking horses, little cars, tricycles, and other riding toys will help keep the child in one spot so you can capture great expressions. Look in toy stores and unique children's gift shops to find the most unusual toys.

FOUR YEARS TO SIX YEARS

Have fun! At this age, kids will make you laugh and will generally play with you. Four- to six-year-olds are little people who walk, talk, and have their

good and bad days. On a good day, they will sing songs for you or with you. They will tell you about their pets at home or about their new baby brother. On a bad day, they will pout and just continue to say “no” to anything you do with them. Appealing to the child’s sense of humor can many times turn around the bad days. Try letting them cling to Mom if they want. Tickle their toes. Try making funny faces and being a clown. In general, be silly and wait them out. They won’t stay in a bad mood forever. (If a child is truly adamant about not being cooperative, check for a fever. Often, a new mom doesn’t even realize the child is sick. Young babies often run fevers due to teething. In these cases, it is best to reschedule portraits for a day when the child is feeling better.)

**Appealing to the child’s sense
of humor can many times
turn around the bad days.**

HINTS AND TIPS

“You’re not the boss of me!” protests a grumpy child. It may be frustrating when children want to run the show in your camera room, but in this chapter, you’ll learn to smile, get control of the situation, and say to yourself, “Oh, yes I am—but I don’t want you to know that.”



This subject’s feet may look odd to you, but this is a natural stance for a little girl. Lots of soft fabrics help keep the focus on her—not on the props.



A most memorable portrait of the big sister protecting and loving her little sister. Gentle expressions have their place in portraits like this one. This girls were posed in a chair that had high arms to help support the big sister's arm as she held the baby.

You can also ask an extroverted child to sing songs to you. Be prepared to capture the moment when the child is lost in song and forgets that the camera is there. On the flip side is the shy child who won't talk at all at this age. It is best to do all the talking when interacting with this child—it takes the pressure off him. Quietly ask Mom for the name of the child's pet or his best playmate, then use the information to carry on a somewhat one-sided conversation. The child may not crack into a huge smile, but his recognition of the names and your extensive knowledge of his life will prompt some great expressions.

OLDER SIBLING SYNDROME

When a new baby is born into a family with another child (or children), you can bet that Mom will want a picture of the newborn in a sibling's arms. While at home, the big brother or sister will hold the baby wonderfully—but the moment you need them to do it in the camera room, they will essentially pretend their arms are limp and are far too weak to hold the baby.

The best way to handle this is to sit the older sibling in a child-sized chair with a back. Make him comfortable, then sit the baby in his lap, leaning the



infant against the sibling's body. Use pillows to help prop the baby in the right spot. This way, the older child is not 100 percent responsible for holding the baby, and you'll take some of the pressure off them.

Ignore any inappropriate behavior from the older child and do not tell him or her to be the "big brother" or "big sister." Instead, emphasize how wonderful he looks and how great he or she is to give you such wonderful smiles. Keep the child's thoughts on himself or herself, not on the new baby.

Another pose that seems to work for a sibling portrait is to lay both children on the floor with the older child's arm over the baby's back. This brings the children's heads close together. Next, create a diversion in order to get the baby to pick his head up and the portrait is done. For another pose, lay the older child on his back and put the baby on his back in the crook of his arm. Shoot from a high angle pointing down at them. Again, a beautiful portrait is created with less pressure on the older sibling to hold the baby.

A WORD ABOUT MOMS

You will encounter many different types of moms when you photograph children. The basic idea is to gain control of the situation. Don't let Mom bribe the children or make promises she can't keep. Instead, give her a chair

This was a natural moment between the sisters, and one that really tells a story about their relationship.

**Moms mean well. They are trying
to get the kids to cooperate and
make your job easier.**

near the camera, help her relax, and ask her to allow you talk to the children. When necessary, you can incorporate her into routines to help create smiles.

Having Mom next to you at the camera and tickling her with a feather will not only give her a job to do, but also a reason to smile at her children. After tickling Mom with the feather, you or she can tickle the child(ren) with it. Remember, you should always tickle the feet or hands first, not the face.

Keep in mind, moms mean well. They are trying to get the kids to cooperate and make your job easier. It is best to keep mom in the camera room, but be sure she knows you are the director. The worst scenario occurs when the mom, dad, and grandparents are all behind the camera yelling at the kids to get their attention. It is simply too much for a child to absorb. Choose one parent to help or do it yourself. Dads are perfect foils. They are usually the tickle monsters in the house and the ones children associate the most with fun and silly games. Tickling Dad or using him to help create smiles usually works well with the two- to six-year-old.

CONCLUSION

Overall, no matter what age child you are photographing, be prepared before going into the camera room, and have a game plan for accomplishing your goals. This will make your job easier and ensure that the parents see you as in control and creative. Be sure to allow enough time so that the session is not rushed, and always strive to create a relaxed atmosphere by having a tremendous amount of patience.

Sometimes the best portraits are those that are kept simple, placing all the emphasis on the expressions.



3. A TYPICAL PORTRAIT SESSION

All successful portrait sessions start with good planning. The better the planning, the less is left to chance. There are enough surprises during a session; there's no reason to add to the inherent stress by failing to prepare.

CLOTHING CONSULTATION

First and foremost in your planning is a clothing consultation. Whether the consultation is done in person, by phone or fax, your website, or a brochure mailed to your client, it is essential to the success of the session. Even the best-planned portrait session can yield less than spectacular images if the subject shows up wearing the wrong clothing.

All successful sessions start with good planning. The better the planning, the less is left to chance.



Children alone provide a challenge, but how about adding three small dogs? Use some whistles and squeaky toys to get all the dogs to look at the camera at the same time. We knew the dogs were to be part of the portrait because it was discussed during our consultation.



Above—A simply constructed set and the classic clothing go hand in hand, creating an image with a nostalgic feel. **Right**—This dark, solid-colored shirt keeps the viewer’s eye on the boy’s sweet expression.



A face-to-face portrait consultation with the client is the best option for ensuring a great portrait sitting. When the client arrives at your studio for the meeting, explain that various clothing options can create a different look in the portraits. Also, be sure to emphasize that solid-colored clothing can help keep the viewer’s eyes on the subject. Show Mom or Dad portraits that illustrate how distracting clothing with insignias, logos, cartoon characters, and bright stripes or bold patterns can be. Not everyone is visually oriented, and the proof of that is that some clients will still show up with the wrong clothing even after a one-hour clothing consultation. To solve this problem, you might consider having on hand a selection of appropriate clothing in a variety of sizes.

Another way to handle the clothing consultation is to create a web page devoted to suitable clothing options. This information can be invaluable for clients who are unable to get to your studio long before their portrait session. As soon as they schedule their appointments, they can log on to the Internet and see the clothing web page.

If neither of the above options work for your client, fax or mail a brochure about clothing options. Send it immediately after the client books their appointment and make a follow-up call to ensure it was received and read.

WHAT WORKS?

Babies look best in clothes that are not fussy or stiff. Little girls who are only a few months old get lost in stiff dresses with collars. Usually, the dress ends up getting pulled into her mouth and is then ruined. Form-fitting cotton clothes in soft pastels and white look best on baby. The softest and simplest clothing works best for newborns to five-month-olds. Among the most lovable and endearing body parts on babies are their little chubby thighs and arms; they make the subject look soft and huggable. If the feet will show in the portrait, do not put socks and shoes on the baby—those tiny toes and feet are simply irresistible.

For older children, simple clothing that fits well and blends into the portrait will look best. Denim is the number-one fabric choice for portraits. The reason is simple: denim is timeless. I defy anyone to tell what year a family portrait was photographed if everyone is wearing denim. Other than the



Top left and right—The same basic portrait can be done with two very different expressions. The solid clothing lets the eye concentrate on the little girl's face. Her changing facial expressions create completely different moods in each portrait. **Bottom**—Twin boys dressed alike don't need much else in their portrait. The little cars they are holding kept them busy and happy.

Top—While the clothing in this portrait is not totally coordinated, it is downplayed by incorporating an original pose that is a welcome change from the traditional head and shoulders close-up portrait. **Bottom left**—Brothers being silly seem twice as interesting when dressed in their best clothes. **Bottom right**—Place your subjects, then work on great expressions—it will result in awesome images! The shirts on these boys were all wrong, so I decided to go with a different look. As a result, the faces are the first thing you see.



hairstyles and makeup, it's hard to tell. Denim doesn't "date" the portrait the way bell-bottoms and miniskirts do.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

During the clothing consultation, be sure to determine how many outfit changes will be included in the portrait session. Nothing is more daunting



Top—Simple is sometimes best. Three older sisters surround this lucky brother. Different colored t-shirts add a little variety to this fresh sibling portrait. **Above left and right**—Dark, solid-colored clothing has a timeless appeal in portraits and works well in a variety of settings. **Facing page**—This white bonnet and comfy dress are timeless clothing options. Notice how the hat frames the tiny subject's face and draws the viewer's gaze to her happy expression.



to a photographer than having a client show up with six outfits for a six-month-old. Often, the mom then proceeds to explain why each outfit is not only special and meaningful, but also that she wants a different background with each of the outfits. Whew! That can be a nightmare.

In most children's sessions, it is best to limit the client to three or fewer outfit or background selections. Doing more will only tire the children, exhaust you, and create indecision when it's time for the client to select their favorite portraits. Besides, as the show business mantra suggests, it's always good to leave the client wanting more.

Portraits of babies should be limited to nude images and the possibility of two outfits. I say "possibility" because you must be sure the mom understands that the portrait session will only last as long as her baby is enjoying it. The session ends when baby's patience ends, not when all the outfits have been photographed. Remember, the objective is to show the subject of the portrait, not the clothing.

THE SESSION

When the client arrives, our aim is to make the children comfortable. We get down on the floor and play with them with some of the toys from the reception area. It's not our aim to get the kids to laugh or smile—only to get them to relate to us and understand that they will enjoy interacting with us.

Clothing Evaluation. A typical photography session starts with the clients arriving and showing us the clothing they have selected. After final decisions are made as to what outfits will be photographed, the client goes into the dressing room to change the children.

Portraits of babies should be limited to nude images and the possibility of two outfits.



When your client is well educated on how to choose picture-perfect clothing for their children's session, a great image results. This is a great example of how denim outfits have a timeless appeal. Note that though these twins have distinctly different personalities and expressions, they were positioned with their shoulders touching to visually support their close bond.



Top left—The addition of one strong pastel prop was enough to make this the perfect baby portrait. The pink in the bear is carried through in the baby's skin tones. **Bottom left**—Ask outgoing children to perform for you. This little girl needed no props—just a little encouragement. She sang and danced her way through the session. A muslin background kept the image soft. **Right**—Simple props and backgrounds let the relationship between the children be the focus of the portrait. This portrait shows the true emotions of the older siblings.

Setup. At this time, the backgrounds that have been chosen are set up and the props to be used are placed out where they are handy to reach. It is important that the props used to elicit smiles are easy to get to, but not within the children's eyesight or reach. That means the tickle feather, musical camera, rattle, and other novelties should be near the camera but not in plain view.

Full-Length Portraits. Usually, the photography begins with full-length portraits. This way the child doesn't feel crowded with you on top of him doing close-ups; this gives you an opportunity to relate to and bond with the child before getting too close. It also gives room for Mom or Dad to be in full view and not hidden by the photographer, lights, or reflectors. A particularly frightened child may even need Mom to sit on the set with him just out of camera view.

Close-ups. The last segment to be photographed is the close-ups. By that point, the child will know you and not feel threatened when you get closer to him with the camera and lights. Hopefully, you will also have worn the child's energy down a little, making it possible for him to sit in one place on a ladder or chair with less fidgeting and more attention.

All told, a typical sitting might consist of two different backgrounds with two or three clothing changes and a variety of props and poses, including full-length, three-quarter, and close-up images.

FINAL VIEWING APPOINTMENT

At the end of the session, we meet the client in the reception room and schedule an appointment for them to see the images at the studio a few days after the session. At that time, we also give the child stickers. Children love



Top—Close-ups are always popular. Be sure your lighting is even across all the children's faces, and meter from one end to the other. **Bottom**—Everything in this portrait is well coordinated, both in style and color, allowing the viewer's gaze to be drawn to the subject of the portrait.





It's a good idea to start the session with full-length shots and move to close-ups when the child becomes more comfortable with you and your equipment.

stickers, and they give us an easy and inexpensive way to have the children take home a memento of their experience.

One or two days before the viewing appointment, call the client to confirm. Never assume they will remember. In one night, things can change tremendously for a family. All appointments need to be confirmed so that your studio time will not be wasted and the clients won't be disappointed.

CONCLUSION

Finally, sit down for two minutes. Relax and review the session. How did it go? Can something be changed to ensure that future sessions run more smoothly? Was there a prop that worked especially well? Was there a new pose that looked particularly good? Spending these few minutes to clarify your thoughts will help improve your next session and will also fire up your creativity for future sessions.

4. CAMERAS

It's exciting to walk into a studio and see all the lights, stands, cameras, filters, backgrounds, reflectors, and other exceptional equipment that can be used for portrait photography—but it's also a luxury to own all of these items. One of the wonderful advantages in making baby and children's portraits is that to be a great photographer, it's not necessary to have every fancy and intricate piece of equipment to start out. It can be done with minimal equipment. As you progress, you can add to your arsenal of photo equipment and broaden your ability to create different portrait effects for your clients.

In this chapter, you'll learn what to look for in a camera, how to choose and use storage media, how to select the best file format for the job, and how to back up your images. We'll also take a look at some of the factors you should consider when selecting a lens. In chapter 5, we'll take a look at some of the other equipment essentials of a successful studio.

DIGITAL CAMERAS

Today, there are literally dozens of professional digital cameras to choose from. Where do you begin in making a selection? The following are some features to keep in mind when choosing a model that's right for you.

Megapixels and Resolution. Resolution refers to the maximum number of individual picture elements (pixels) that the camera's sensor can capture. A megapixel is simply a million pixels. The more pixels your camera has, the more detail it can capture in each photograph. The more detail you have, the more you can enlarge a picture before it becomes "grainy" and starts to look out of focus. Today's professional digital cameras range from 3 to 18 megapixels in 35mm cameras and 48 megapixels and beyond for medium format camera backs.

While having more megapixels available is generally better than having less, the best determination of camera quality is made by examining the maximum enlargement possible from an image file. Any of the professional 35mm digital cameras available can make very acceptable prints up to 24x30 inches. The only time the use of a larger megapixel camera is noticeable is on very large prints or when the subjects are very small in the photograph. Larger sensors provide more detail, allowing for larger magnification before artifacts are apparent.

To be a great photographer, it's
not necessary to have every fancy
and intricate piece of equipment.



Parents often purchase large-size prints of family group shots. Make sure that your camera has enough megapixels so you can sell high-quality wall-sized portraits and meet that demand!

What resolution you need depends on the work that you do. For example, if you photograph a number of large family groups and routinely sell 20x24-, 30x40-, or 40x60-inch images to the client, you will need a digital camera with a large file size, preferably 12 megapixels or higher. However, if you're selling only 8x10-inch images and photographing a lot of highly mobile toddlers, speed will be of far greater importance.

ENLARGEMENTS

Be sure that any camera you choose has a megapixel rating that will allow you to produce quality images in the print sizes your clients demand. An 8-megapixel camera will print an optimum 11x14-inch image. A quality 16x20-inch print can be made from a 10-megapixel camera. Photographing in RAW format (see page 51) affords an ability to print larger images and ensures optimal image quality.

Burst Rate. If speed is critical, you'll want to consider models with high burst rates—cameras that can capture several frames per second for a few seconds before needing to stop and render all of the images. These can be ideal for capturing candid images of kids on the move.

Shutter Lag. In the last few years, most of the camera manufacturers have solved many of the problems that plagued earlier digital cameras. Shutter lag (the time between pressing the shutter button and when the camera actually records the image) is no longer a problem with most professional digital cameras. The Fuji professional digital cameras are slower than the Nikons and Canons but are usually manageable. Most of the Olympus cameras and the older Nikon 950, 990, and 995 cameras have some shutter delay, but you can learn through experience to be aware of this problem when taking pictures.

CCD vs. CMOS Sensors. In digital cameras, images are captured on electronic sensors rather than on film. There are two popular types of sensors in most of today's digital cameras: CCD and CMOS. The first sensors produced tiny images—only 320x240 pixels—but pixel density has steadily increased over the years.

A camera with a high burst rate can help you take a quick succession of shots—and this can be a real asset when you're trying to capture the quickly changing expressions of young subjects.





In digital cameras, images are captured on electronic sensors rather than on film.

CCD (Charge-Coupled Device). CCD sensors use an array of photodiodes, arranged in a grid pattern, to convert light into electronic signals. All CCD cameras use interpolation to create images. For example, a 3-megapixel digital camera only has 750,000 red, 750,000 blue, and 1.5 million green pixels, but the camera's on-board processor generates a 3-million pixel color image by interpolating the data from each neighboring pixel.

CMOS (Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor). CMOS sensors have some advantages over CCD-type sensors. First, they use only a fraction of the power required by CCDs, making them a great feature in battery-powered cameras. Additionally, CMOS sensors are made using the same techniques and equipment as more familiar CMOS circuits like CPUs and RAM, so they cost less to produce than CCDs, which require specialized fabrication equipment.

Like CCDs, CMOS sensors use an array of photodiodes to convert light into electronic signals. The weak electronic charge generated by the photodiode is stored in a small capacitor. The major difference between CCDs and CMOS sensors is in the way these stored charges are converted into a usable

signal. A CCD sensor scans its pixels consecutively. As it does so, the stored charges from each row are actually shifted down to the next row. At the bottom of the array, the charges in the final row are output in a serial stream. The voltage levels of each pixel in the serial stream are maximized by an on-chip amplifier prior to output and sent to either an external or internal analog-to-digital converter (ADC), where the signals are converted into an array of bytes that makes up the image.

Each pixel in a CMOS sensor, on the other hand, has its own amplifier circuit, so the signal amplification is performed prior to the image being scanned. The resulting signal is strong enough to be used without any further processing. Unlike CCDs, CMOS sensors often contain additional image-processing circuitry (including ADC and JPEG compression proces-

Be sure to approach every session with a high-capacity media card. Doing so will allow you to capture countless great expressions and poses.



MEDIA CARDS

Media cards are available in a variety of formats and from various manufacturers. My recommendation is to have a few 1GB cards on hand for shorter sessions, a 2GB card for longer sessions, and a 4GB card for photographing multiple sessions in a single day. Remember that media cards are basically a storage unit. If you need to transfer information quickly from one computer to another, a media card can be used as an extra drive. Just put it in the computer, write to it, take it out, and put it in another computer. It's not just for photos, but any information that you need to move.

sors) directly on the chip, making it easier and faster to retrieve and process the picture information. This results in fewer chips per camera, increased reliability, reduced power consumption, and a more compact design.

Until the introduction of the first Canon CMOS professional camera, the Canon D30, CMOS sensors were generally regarded as a low-cost, lower-quality alternative to CCD sensors and were typically found in inexpensive digital cameras. A major problem in older CMOS sensors was that some pixels oftentimes had more or less sensitivity than did their neighboring pixels. This unevenness translated into noise. Canon solved the noise problem in the D30 by scanning the sensor twice—once just before the shutter opened, and then once more while the shutter was open. The “dark” image was then electronically subtracted from the exposed image, which virtually eliminated the noise.

Digital Storage Media. Once an image is captured by the image sensor, the data is stored on the camera's storage media. The most popular are microdrives and CompactFlash (CF) cards.

Microdrives. Microdrives came on the market very early in the evolution of digital imaging. Their advantages were their large storage capacity and fast read and write speeds in the camera and computer. They were also very inexpensive compared to the CF and SmartMedia cards. The major disadvantage of microdrives is that they are miniature computer hard drives that have moving parts enclosed in the housing. This presents two distinct problems. First, if a microdrive is dropped, it is possible that it may never work again, and the photographer could lose every image on the microdrive at the time. This has happened to a number of photographers. The second problem is that a microdrive, being a computer hard drive, can crash just like any computer hard drive. These factors present a considerable risk for the professional portrait or wedding photographer.

CompactFlash Cards. CF cards are solid-state circuits. With no moving parts to break, these cards are practically indestructible! I have met three photographers who have left CF cards in the pockets of their trousers and sent them through the washing machine and dryer without harming the card or the images recorded on it. CF cards were initially very expensive, had limited storage capacity, and very slow read and write speeds. This has all changed. The prices of CF cards have dropped dramatically—so much so that they are usually less expensive than microdrives of the same storage size. Additionally, the storage capacity for CF cards has actually surpassed that of microdrives. Lexar Media and SanDisk offer 1-, 2-, 4-, and 8-gigabyte (GB) CF cards for professional photographers. These large-capacity cards can store hundreds of files and can be used with the latest high-resolution cameras. Finally, the read and write speeds of professional CF cards have also surpassed that of microdrives, making them extremely efficient to use.

Card Readers. A card reader is a computer interface accessory that enables the computer to read data from digital media cards. These are built into many newer computers or can be added to a computer through a USB connection. They are also built into some printers.

IMAGE FILE FORMATS

A file format is the “language” in which a digital image is written. There are three main formats of concern to photographers.

TIFF (.tif). The TIFF file format employs a “lossless” compression called LZW, which means that when the file is compressed, no image data is thrown out. While this ensures better image quality, it also means that the files are not compressed as much as JPEG files. Compared to a JPEG file, therefore, an image saved as a TIFF file will take up much more space on your memory card and will use up more of your computer’s memory. Also, when an image is captured in the TIFF format, the camera makes certain automatic image adjustments (unlike with RAW files, where corrections can be selectively made by a photographer after the shoot).

JPEG (.jpg). The JPEG file format employs a “lossy” compression algorithm, which means that data is thrown away in order to minimize the file size and cannot be recovered at a later time. The benefit of this format is a much smaller file size. This means the camera can process each file more quickly (i.e., you can shoot faster) and the memory card can hold more im-

Having a selection of lenses at your disposal will allow you to capture a variety of perspectives in the studio or on location.



ages. Like TIFF image files, JPEGs are subject to some automatic in-camera corrections.

RAW (.raw). When you shoot in your camera's RAW mode, the camera applies no automatic contrast, sharpness, saturation, or color balance adjustments. This allows for maximum flexibility. Additionally, images recorded in the RAW mode are not compressed. This means that all data captured by the image sensor is preserved, resulting in maximum image quality. Unfortunately, these uncompressed files take up considerable space on memory cards and on your computer. While opening and processing RAW camera files used to require special software, Photoshop now comes with the software required to work with these files.

WHY SHOOT JPEGs?

So why photograph in JPEG at all? Because it's a smaller file, opens quickly, and needs little postproduction. A suggestion is to use JPEG when you are sure the images will not be reproduced large and also, when speed is of the utmost concern. If the lighting is consistent such as in a studio and the photographs are going to be of a baby for a baby book only, then it is possible that JPEG would be the best choice.

LENSES

Today, more and more of the digital cameras manufactured are considered "full frame," meaning that the image sensor is the same size as a 35mm film frame. This means that the lens you choose will deliver the coverage you expect with a film camera. In other words, you can use a 100mm lens (my personal favorite for portraits) wide open at f/2.8 and throw the background out of focus or set the lens to f/8.0 to keep an active toddler in focus while moving forward and backward on your set.

If your image sensor is not full frame, you will need to multiply the rated focal length of the lens (e.g., 80mm) by a lens-conversion factor (e.g., 1.6X) to determine the effective focal length of the lens. Using a conversion factor of 1.6X, for example, an 80mm lens becomes a 50mm lens ($80 \div 1.6 = 50$). (The conversion factor will differ from one model/manufacturer to the next. Consult the owner's manual for more information.)

MINIMUM CAMERA AND LENS REQUIREMENTS

To get the most from each portrait session, you'll want to make sure that you've purchased a few key pieces of equipment. This includes:

- digital SLR camera (10 megapixels or higher)
- selection of lenses, including wide angle, 50mm, and at least a 100mm
- solid tripod or camera stand

Today, more and more of the digital cameras manufactured are considered "full frame."





A good telephoto lens can allow you to get a variety of image perspectives, from full-length shots to close-ups, allowing you to focus on the actions or expressions of your clients without moving an inch. It can also be a good way to capture close-ups of camera-shy kids while keeping your distance.

POST-CAPTURE WORKFLOW

Following your client's session, you'll need to copy your image files to your computer and create a backup DVD of the original images. (At my studio, we burn two DVDs to be doubly sure that the files are safely archived.) We then delete all of the images from the memory card and reformat the device to ensure it is ready for the next session.

Next, we go to File>Browse in Adobe Photoshop (CS2) to access Adobe Bridge. (Alternatively, you can open, edit, print, or share your RAW files using a program like Canon's RAW Image converter, Microsoft's RAW Image Thumbnailer and Viewer (for Windows XP), BreezeBrowser, Bibble RAW Converter, or Picasa.) We review each of the images from the session and delete any shots that we never want to see again. The "keeper" images are then saved to a 250GB portable hard drive connected to the computer via a USB port. This allows us to keep our main hard drive clean and not waste hard drive space.

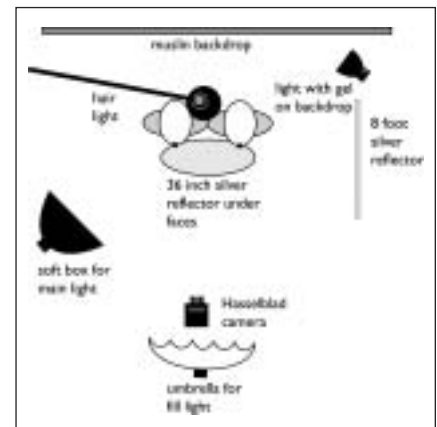
Next, we complete any required cleanup (minor retouching, color corrections, etc.) of the images that will be presented during the proofing session. The images are saved into a client folder, which is copied and transferred to the sales computer for the sales presentation.

5. LIGHTING

Once you've selected a camera, you'll need to purchase some lighting equipment. Many beautiful portraits can be made in the studio using only two lights and one or two reflectors. The more lights you add, the more depth and highlights you can create in the portrait.

STROBES

Strobes (also called electronic studio flashes) are the studio photographer's preferred light source for several reasons. These units run cool, making a subject more comfortable on the set. They also allow you to ensure a predictable, consistent exposure. Strobes emit a flash or "pop" of light, making it difficult to judge the effectiveness of a lighting setup. For this reason, the



Left and above diagram—A hairlight was used to accentuate the tendrils of hair. The nude look keeps the viewer's eye focused on the subjects. The lighting diagram shows the setup for this portrait. **Facing page**—This is another example of simple lighting. A softbox was used as the main light, and an umbrella was used for fill light. A reflector placed to the boy's right helped bounce light into his hair. A spotlight was added on the backdrop to help bring out the second boat in the image.





Facing page—Strobes “run cool” and are therefore a good bet for working with kids who may not be as tolerant of the heat produced by other artificial light sources.

units are equipped with a modeling light, which is typically a 250-watt tungsten halogen bulb that stays on continuously to allow you to judge the effectiveness of your lighting setup.

There are two varieties of strobes on the market: monolights and power packs. With either type, your camera communicates with the strobe(s) via a sync cord or slave unit.

Monolights. Both the flash head and power supply are contained in a monolight unit. These lights are AC powered and are usually triggered by direct connection to the camera’s flash sync or via a slave unit that allows the strobe to be triggered remotely (i.e., without a direct connection to the camera). Many monolights have a built-in slave unit that will fire the strobe automatically when another strobe is triggered in the studio. I prefer Photogenic Powerlights, but high-quality monolights are available from a wide variety of manufacturers.

Power Packs. Power pack units can accept multiple flash heads, which can be adjusted independently. Studio power pack units can be either AC or DC powered. Some units will operate on DC voltage with a car battery. This can be handy on location when you want the flexibility of a studio light system but cannot plug into an AC power source.

BUILT-IN AND ON-CAMERA FLASH

Many inexpensive cameras and some professional models have a built-in flash. This is either part of the camera assembly or “pops up” when activated. The units cast light on subject relatively near (within about 15 feet of) the camera. While it is an effective option in some cases, it can also result in red-eye.

For better results and more flexibility, many photographers use on-camera flash. This type of flash is connected to the camera via the hot shoe of a sync cord. The unit can be mounted on the camera, held by the photographer at a position off the camera, or mounted above or to the side of the cameras using a flash bracket.

These flash units may be completely manual or fully automatic. Manual units emit the same amount of light every time they are triggered. Some have settings that allow you to vary the light output. It’s a good idea to use a flash meter with these units so that you can gauge the light output and set your camera accordingly. In automatic camera modes, the camera communicates with the flash and tells it how much light to emit for proper exposure. This is accomplished using TTL (through the lens) metering technology.

The downside to using these units is that they do not have modeling lights, so you can’t see the effect of the light before photographing. However, your digital SLR will allow you to review the image results on your LCD screen, and you can tweak the light output as necessary to get the effect you desire.

There are many portable strobes on the market. The important features are power and flexibility. My preference is the Canon 580. When used with my Canon cameras, it reads the light automatically and correctly sets the light output. I can also increase or reduce the output via a simple setting. A light modifier I particularly enjoy using with this flash is a Gary Fong Light-sphere, which goes right on the flash head and allows the light to bounce all around it softening and spreading the direct flash before it ever hits the sub-

For better results and more flexibility, many photographers use on-camera flash.



Facing page—The lighting for this one-of-a-kind face was simply a softbox, an 8-foot reflector, and an umbrella fill light. **Right**—It was important to keep the image soft and bring out the subject's eyes. This was accomplished by using a softbox for the main light and a reflector directly under her face to add highlights to her eyes.

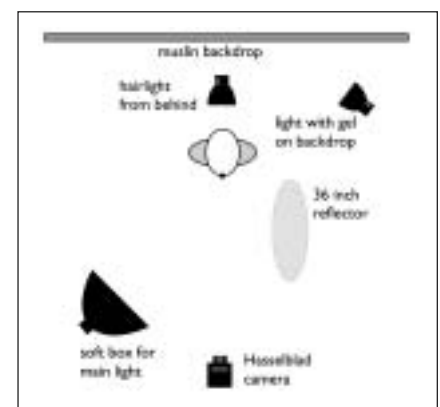


LIGHT METERS

A great light meter is an essential piece of equipment for any professional. The light meter measures the light output from the studio lighting units or the available light. It is important to buy not just an available light meter (the kind built into most digital SLRs) but one that will also work as a flash meter. It is essential to good exposure to know what your light output is. Each light is metered separately and then together. The light output is adjusted so that you can work at the f-stop that suits your subject and scene.

ject. These are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased on his website (www.garyfong.com).

The Canon 580 flashes are easy to use and have built-in slaves that can be set to trigger multiple units to fire at the same time as the “master” flash. They can also be mounted in umbrellas to simulate studio strobes. Also, portable strobes can even serve as a decent backup lighting system in your studio when there aren’t enough funds to purchase extra studio strobes.



Top—The classic look of this formal portrait will never go out of style. The background was intentionally kept dark to match the subject's clothing and allow their skin tones to stand out. A softbox was used as the main light, and an umbrella was used for fill. Large reflectors were placed both on the right and under their faces to complete the setup. The light bouncing off the large reflector to the right also illuminated the subjects' hair. **Left and above diagram**—This beautiful close-up was made with a softbox (main light), a hair light to bring out the subject's curls, and a background light fitted with a pink gel to create the saturated tones. The black hat helps keep your eye on the little girl's face.

A softbox contains and directs
the light, giving more control
over where it falls.

LIGHT MODIFIERS

Strobes need to be fitted with light modifiers to be truly effective. Light modifiers include softboxes, umbrellas, grids, snoots, barndoors, diffusers, and other assorted items used to direct the light in specific ways. The two most essential light modifiers are umbrellas and softboxes.

Umbrellas. This umbrella-shaped modifier can be lined with a variety of fabrics to affect the color of the light that is bounced onto the subject or scene. The inside of an umbrella can be white (softest effect), gold (for a warmer light), silver (hard bounce with bright reflections), or a mix of the two, often called a zebra (soft light with a good highlight). The larger the umbrella, the softer and larger the return of light. No matter what the interior color of the umbrella, it is best to use one that has a black cover on the outside so your light is all directed back at the subject instead of spilling through the fabric.

Softboxes. Softboxes can be used alone or combined with umbrellas and reflectors. A softbox contains and directs the light, giving more control over where it falls. Light from a softbox also falls off faster than light from an umbrella. The larger the softbox, the softer the light. Also, the closer your light is to the subject the softer the light.

How do you decide when to use a softbox or umbrella as your main source of lighting? An easy rule is to look at your background. An umbrella creates “spill” light, meaning the light does not fall just where it is pointed. If your background is light, it usually doesn’t matter if it gets some spill light. A dark or textured background, however, could become totally washed out and disappear with too much light hitting it. So, when the background needs more controlled lighting, a softbox is essential.

The umbrella and the softbox are used as your “main” and “fill” lights. The main light is the primary light source for your subject. The fill light does just what the name implies: it fills in the shadows. How much it fills in the shadows determines the lighting ratio. This ratio is the difference in f-stops between the light on the highlight side of the face and the shadow side of the face. It is usually expressed as a proportion, like 3:1. A portrait with a 3:1 ratio has deeper shadows than one with a 1:1 ratio. Most children’s photography is done with a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio unless a special effect is being created. This means that the only shadows on the face are extremely light and open.

LIGHT QUALITY

Whether light is harsh (creating rapid transitions between shadow and highlight) or soft (creating gradual transitions between shadow and highlight) is directly related to the size of the light source relative to the subject.

At the identical setting, a light source placed 10 feet from a portrait subject creates softer shadows than the same light placed 20 feet away. This is because, by moving the light farther from the subject, the relative size of the light source is decreased (making the transition between highlight and shadow areas take place over a smaller area). For example, the sun is a huge light source, but because it is so far away, it creates extremely harsh shadows on a clear day. Conversely, on a cloudy day, the entire sky acts as the light source and creates much softer shadows. The same situation occurs when using a light modifier, such as a softbox. Though the strobe bulb is quite small, the modifier increases the size of the light relative to the subject and yields softer shadows.



The catchlights in this subject's eyes clearly show that two lights and a reflector were used to capture the image. Using a higher camera angle caused the baby to lift her face upward and beautifully rendered the shape of her face.

Reflectors. Reflectors are considered a necessary part of a photographer's tool kit. Round 36-inch or 48-inch white or silver ones, and the 4x8-foot standing silver reflector that can be converted to white, silver, or black with elastic fabrics that go over the frame are among the most popular choices. The round reflectors are used under the face or to the fill side of the face. This is where the modeling lights on the strobes make lighting easier. When placing the reflector, it is important to know if it is actually reflecting the light. Has it "caught" the light, and is it bouncing it back into the subject?

LIGHT RATIO

The difference between the light side of a subject and the dark side can be expressed as a ratio. The higher the ratio is, the greater the contrast between the two sides. For instance, a 1:1 ratio would indicate that there is no difference between the highlight side and the shadow side. At a 2:1 ratio, the highlight side is twice as bright as the shadow side (which is to say, there is a one-stop difference between the meter readings for each side). This lighting ratio will display soft but visible shadows. In a 4:1 ratio (highlight side two stops lighter than dark side), the shadows will be much darker, but with some detail. At an 8:1 ratio (highlight side three stops lighter than dark side), significant loss of detail will occur in the shadows.

The normal range for portrait photography is between 1:1 and 4:1, but children's portraits tend to be shot at 1:1 or 2:1.

To measure the light ratio, meter the highlight side of the subject, then the shadow side. Then count the number of stops difference between the two. If the ratio is too high, add more fill light (if using a strobe, adjust the setting lower; if using a reflector, move it closer to the subject) or reduce the setting on the main light (or move it farther away).

**Play with the reflector until you
see highlights (called catchlights)
appear in the eyes.**

The easiest way to answer this question is to look at your subject's eyes. Play with the reflector until you see highlights (called catchlights) appear in the eyes. A reflector under the chin just out of camera view will create a second highlight in the eye on the bottom of the iris. This means that two catchlights will appear in the eye. This lights up the eyes and makes them look even more sparkly and lively.

Grids. A grid (also called a honeycomb grid) is a modifier that typically fits inside the strobe's reflector dish and forces the light to travel in a straight line. The most popular types are 10-, 20-, 30-, and 40-degree grids, but some manufacturers offer an ultraprecise 5-degree model. By attaching this modifier to your strobe, you get complete control over the beams of light illuminating the subject.

MINIMUM LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS

Below is a list of the absolute minimum lighting equipment needed to create professional studio portraits of children. It is also worth mentioning here that most of this equipment can be bought used through various photo dealers and at photo flea markets and eBay. If buying used equipment, be sure to have it checked out by a professional service center. Even if you have to pay for an equipment overhaul, you'll enjoy a huge savings over buying brand-new equipment.

- three strobe lights
- two umbrellas (one white, one zebra, both 45 inches)
- one softbox
- 36-inch round silver reflector
- 4x8-foot reflector

DIFFUSION EFFECTS

Gone are the days of needing to sift through tons of glass or gel “hardware” filters and mount them on your lens. Programs like Corel Paint Shop Pro and Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements now offer software versions of these filters that make the application of a softening effect quick and easy.

Alternatively, you can try a handy, inexpensive little lens called a Lensbaby. The lens mounts on your camera like any other lens but provides a pinpoint area of focus in the picture, with that sharp area surrounded by a graduated blur. You can move the point of sharp focus to any part of your photo by bending the flexible lens tubing. It’s a lot of fun to play with this little lens and come up with new looks in your portraits.

Below—Don’t overlook the option of using window light to create beautiful portraits. **Facing page**—Overexposing the background in this image created separation from the subjects’ dark hair. Sepia-toned prints like this one are always a popular choice with parents, as they have a timeless feel.





6. EASY AND EFFECTIVE LIGHTING

THREE-LIGHT SETUP

The simplest studio lighting setup involves only three lights: a main light, fill light, and a background light. The main light might be set at $f/8.0$. The background (if it is a dark background) could be a full stop more than the main light, making it $f/11.0$. The fill light would be either $f/4.0$ or $f/5.6$, depending on how much fill you desire for your portrait.

In this scenario, the camera is set at $f/8.0$. Because the studio strobes will effectively control all your lighting, the shutter speed only needs to be fast enough to shut out any extraneous light. If you are photographing a room with a great deal of available light and it is important that none of that light be in the portrait, then shutter speeds of $1/125$ second (or less) are necessary. I generally prefer to photograph at $1/125$ second in the studio. This ensures that none of the ambient light affects my portrait.

In this setup, the main light would be placed to the left of the subject with a reflector on the opposite side. The fill light would be positioned next to the camera (on the same side as the main light). The background light would then be placed behind the subject and pointed at the background. If the portrait is full-length, the background light can be off to the side of the background, pointed at the background, and fitted with a grid to direct the light.

TWO-LIGHT SETUP

It is also possible to light a portrait with only two lights and a reflector. The main light is usually placed to camera left, and the second light functions as a background or hair light. A reflector is then used in one of three places: on the right side of the subject to bounce the main light back into the face; underneath the subject's face so that it catches the main light and bounces it back onto the face, producing catchlights at the bottom of the eyes; or finally, over the subject's head to catch the main light and spill onto the hair.

As you can see, there are many ways to light one subject. They are all correct, and the choice as to which to use is up to you, the artist. Your selection will be determined by what you are trying to convey in the portrait.

Of course, other lights can be added to either of the setups described above. For instance, accent lights can be used to emphasize faces, fabrics, or just the shoulder of the subject. Extra lights add dimension to your portraits and give a more rounded feeling to the subjects.

The simplest setup involves only three lights: a main light, fill light, and a background light.

You can completely change the mood of your images by changing the way the background is lit.

EFFECTIVE BACKGROUND LIGHTING

You can completely change the mood of your images by changing the way the background is lit. The light on the background can create total separation between the subject and background or illuminate the background evenly. It can also create a vignette effect, or illuminate the background so that it becomes an important part of the portrait. Sometimes it is interesting to selectively highlight props in the background and not flood the entire background with light.

TRY THIS!

You can easily create beautiful, soft, and sensitive close-ups with two lights (a main light and a background light) and two reflectors (one under the face and another on the opposite side of the subject from the main light). This creates a “tent” effect, eliminating all shadows. This type of lighting is pleasing to the majority of mothers, since it’s what they are accustomed to seeing in magazines and on television.

We’ll cover some other effective lighting setups in the following chapter.

Positioning this child somewhat far from the background to let it go out of focus and lighting it to soften the colors to better match the soft shade of her dress brought out the little girl’s star qualities.



HIGH KEY AND LOW KEY

When determining the portrait concept for a session, many photographers first determine the overall tonal range (or “key”) of the portrait. In a high-key image, the overall tonal range is primarily white or very light. In other words, the clothing, props, and background are comprised of light tones. In high key portraits, it is important to ensure that the background does not distract the viewer’s gaze from the subject. To meet this goal, it is usually best to light the background evenly, without any bright spots to pull the eye away from the subject. Sometimes, the background light is set to the same output as the main light.

A low key image calls for darker clothing, background, and props. In these portraits, the face is the lightest part of the image, and therefore, the portrait element to which the viewer’s gaze is first drawn. Many times low key portraits incorporate Rembrandt lighting. This lighting pattern brings out the highlights of the face and enhances detail in the clothing. (See the discussion below for a description of this lighting style.)

Of course, you are not limited to producing these classic looks in your portraiture. Dark clothing on a light background is very contemporary and striking. Bright or primary-colored clothing will appear crisp and sharp against a white background. Those portraits have a magazine quality about them. In such images, the backgrounds should be lighter than the subjects’ faces.

LIGHTING PATTERNS

Lighting patterns refer to specific, standardized positioning of the main and fill lights to create a desired pattern of highlight and shadow on the subject’s face. Some common lighting patterns are listed below.

Flat Lighting. Flat lighting is a type of lighting that lights both sides of the face evenly. Flat lighting is created by having a single light source attached to the camera or directly above the camera. On-camera flash creates flat lighting on a subject.

Butterfly Lighting. Also known as Paramount lighting, this is a feminine lighting style that produces a butterfly-like shadow beneath the subject’s nose. The lighting style emphasizes smooth skin and high cheekbones. To produce this lighting style, the main light is positioned high and in front of the client’s nose. The fill light is placed directly beneath the main light, at the client’s head height. Next, the hair light is placed opposite the main light. (Care should be taken to ensure that it lights only the hair and does not skim across the subject’s face.) Finally, the background light is placed low and behind the subject to form a semicircle of light behind the subject that fades out toward the edges.

Loop Lighting. Loop lighting is a variation of butterfly lighting and is flattering for people with oval-shaped faces. To create this style of lighting, place the main light lower and more to the side of the subject so that the shadow under the nose becomes a small loop on the side of the face. The fill light should be placed on the opposite side of the camera, across from the main light, and close to the camera/subject axis. It’s important to ensure that the fill light does not cast a shadow on the subject. The hair light and background light should be placed as described for the butterfly lighting portrait style.

Loop lighting is a variation of butterfly lighting and is flattering for people with oval-shaped faces.



When lighting a light-colored textured back-drop like this one, you must be careful not to overexpose it and blow out the detail.

Rembrandt Lighting. The subject's face is lit from 45 degrees to one side, creating strong shadows. The shadow from the nose falls on the subject's cheek and merges with the shadows on the unlit side of his or her face. This pattern divides the face into two sides and gives shape and depth to the subject's features. To create this look, place the main light lower and farther to the right than is described in the above discussions. Position the hair light as described in the loop lighting section, but move it closer to the subject to produce stronger highlights in the hair. The background light should be placed as described above. However, the accent light should be placed to produce brilliant highlights that outline the face and shoulders.

Split Lighting. The term split lighting is used to describe a lighting style in which the key light illuminates only half of the face. It's a dramatic lighting style that can be used to narrow wide faces or wide features and can be softened slightly when a weak fill is introduced.

To create this style, move the main light lower and farther to the side of the subject than it is used in the other lighting style descriptions. Sometimes, the light may be placed behind the subject. This placement may be necessary when the subject is turned far from the camera.

Profile Lighting. Also referred to as rim lighting, this dramatic lighting style is used to emphasize a subject's elegant features. In this portrait style,

the subject is turned 90 degrees from the lens. The main light is placed behind the subject to illuminate best the center of the profile and also to highlight the edge of the face, as well as the hair and neck of the subject. The fill light is positioned on the same side of the subject as the main light, and a reflector is added opposite the main light to fill in the shadows. The background light is placed as described earlier. In this setup, the addition of a hair light is optional, but it can be used on the reflector side of the subject for enhanced tonal separation from the background.

CONCLUSION

Lighting is a highly personal decision. While there are rules of lighting and techniques that work best, it is ultimately up to you to decide what mood you wish to create in the portrait and then convey it with your choice of lighting. Because children and babies have short attention spans and are very active, it is usually best to use simple lighting setups so you can concentrate on the subject's pose and expression.

Use simple lighting setups so you can concentrate on the subject's pose and expression.



With simple lighting, you can focus your energies on capturing a great expression like this one.

7. ARE YOU A PHOTOGRAPHER OR AN ARTIST?

Style is what separates artists from “shooters.” An artist plans for and pre-visualizes a portrait of a child before pushing the shutter button. A photographer takes some photos of children hoping to get “something.” An artist knows how to elicit and capture emotion. A photographer waits and waits until an expression emerges.

This little beauty couldn't wait to show me her idea for a portrait. The umbrella was her own. Encouraging your clients to bring one of their child's favorite items for use as a prop can allow you to create a more diverse catalog of images.

GAME PLAN FOR STYLE

Whether you devote ten minutes after meeting a client to developing a photographic approach that they'll love or allow substantially more time to con-



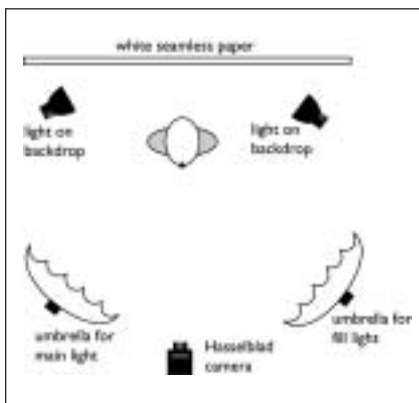
ceptualize your approach, taking the time to plan for your session will help you maximize your creativity, draw a greater number of clients, and increase your profits.

It's also a good idea to cultivate a portrait style that is distinctly different from that offered by your competitors. One of the trademark qualities of my own photography is natural expressions that evoke emotion. The moments I capture are fleeting and few. Parents recognize that the moments I capture depict their children in their most happy, unguarded, or emotional states.

When I started out in portraiture, I knew I had to create a type of portrait that was not available from other photographers in the area. No one in my area photographed children in high key at that time. By creating high key images and capturing natural expressions, I quickly created a unique style for myself. Though I now photograph mostly on location, people still comment on the old high key portraits I made when their children were young or tell me they've seen portraits made for their friends. They still think of me as an innovator of this portrait style.

Left—The tulle draped over the arm of this white wicker chair seems like a small detail, but it adds a touch of softness to this pretty portrait. **Top and bottom right**—Serious expressions can be wonderful—especially with the eyes turned toward the camera (top), while capturing the child looking off-camera and toward the main light can create a more candid, intimate portrait (bottom).





Top—Bet you can guess which of these children is the mischievous one. Parents love images that capture their children's personalities. **Right and above diagram**—Pose your subjects, then make them laugh. What could be more simple? The lighting setup used to create this portrait is shown above.





IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

To find your own style, you must find something you are good at and enjoy. If your outdoor portraits of children are wonderful and natural, then create those images with a twist and develop that concept into your personal style. Maybe your look will involve a special soft focus look or a grouping of portraits that tell a story—even a unique location that few know about or have even considered. With all the diversity that digital photography offers now this also includes special effects and digital painting. The means that you can utilize to build a unique portfolio are endless.

PROPS

Unique props are another trademark of my signature portrait style. Going out of your way to find resources for studio props that no one else has is worth the time and money it takes to own them. Check out garage sales and flea markets for furniture that can be refinished.

The online auction site eBay is wonderful place to find an incredible and ever-changing selection of props. The merchandise marts in large cities have gift shows at different times of the year (these shows are for the trade and are where gift shops and toy stores buy their merchandise wholesale). As a photographer, you can attend these shows and see everything available, then buy at wholesale prices. Professional photographic organizations also have trade shows where manufacturers and dealers display everything a photographer could want to find for props. Be careful not to buy what your competitor is buying; simply ask the vendor if your competition has purchased any prop you may be considering.

VARIETY

Perhaps the variety of portraits and looks you can create in one portrait session is what makes you stand out from your competition. Being known for photographing children in a variety of themes could be another style. One photographer created unique portraits of babies in flowerpots, a style that made her world famous. Whatever your style, don't feel locked into it forever. The great artists of the world have been known for their "moods"; though their basic artistry was consistent, their styles changed as they evolved



Top left and right—Capturing a child in action can yield portraits with a lot of personality—and they have an instant appeal to parents! Above and facing page—The props used in these images coordinate perfectly with the subjects' attire and tie all of the portrait elements together.





This grouping of images showcases those tiny baby parts that parents cherish. Note how well the parent's hands depict the loving relationship—and show the scale of the tiny infant's body. The artistic edge effects add an appealing softness to the images.

and learned more about their art and themselves. If you are known as a color photographer today, there is no reason why you can't be known for your black & white photos next year. Keep your mind open and be ready to explore new areas as photographer and artist.

In digitally “painting” my portraits, my photographic style has once again evolved. Clients that once viewed me as a photographer now think of me as an artist. This product line is higher priced and the investment is larger, so I now have a client base that never existed for me before.

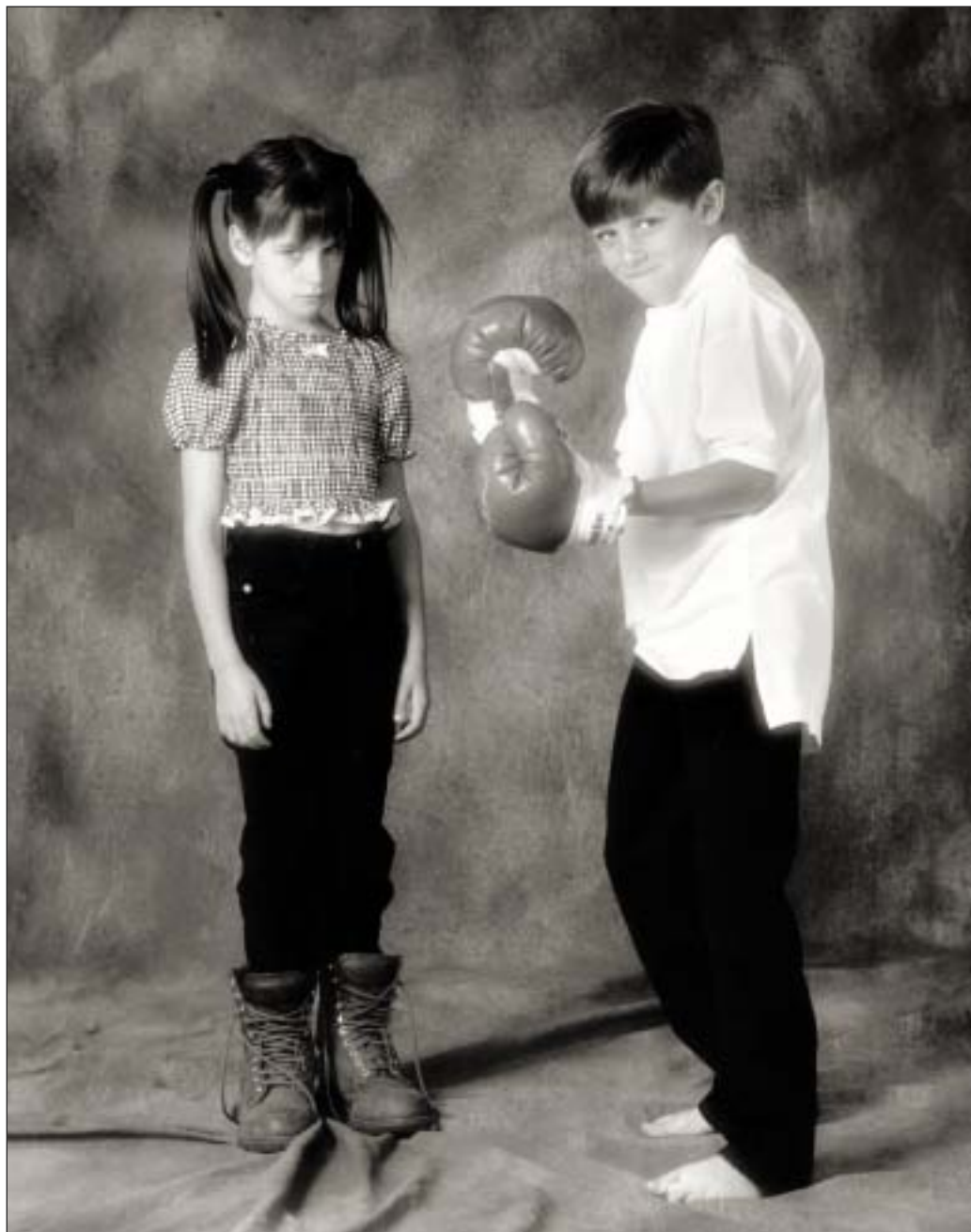
CREATIVITY

To develop your style, you must also develop your creativity. Many people feel they do not possess creative personalities. However, creative people are not always born that way; many have learned to develop their creativity by becoming creative thinkers and problem solvers. The first step is to learn to see everyday objects, props, and locations in new ways. It expands your vision and allows you to see things differently.

Look at an everyday object such as a towel. Hold it, open it, fold it, throw it in the air, and watch how it lands. Clear your mind. Think about how to use a towel, or multiple towels, in a portrait. Sit with your eyes closed and visualize your options. Then, write down all your ideas. The following are some ideas that might emerge.

- piles of soft, fluffy, pastel towels around a nude baby
- a pile of pastel towels folded and fluffy with a sleeping baby on top.
- a baby on her tummy with a towel under her and one just barely over her head like a hood
- a baby holding the soft fluffy towel like a favorite baby blanket

Think outside of the box to create personality-filled images your clients can't resist.





You can further develop these themes to come up with other options:

- Wet the baby's hair and spray her body with a mixture of baby oil and water to make her look like she just got out of the bath, then wrap her in the towel.
- Lay the baby down on her back on the piles of towels and photograph from a downward angle—as if the baby just woke up.
- Place the nude baby sitting with the towels and add some baby powder, bottles of baby lotion, and stuffed animals for props. Put some baby powder on her to add to the effect.
- Use the towels as the background for the portrait.
- Photograph just the baby's face as a very tight close-up with a towel wrapped around her face.
- Dress the baby in bright colors or a tie-dye outfit and place towels in the same colors all around the baby.

You might also consider trying this creativity-boosting exercise with baby bottles, flowers, stuffed animals, soft mixed pieces of fabrics, baby furniture (such as chairs), beads and pearls, and pillows. Think of more objects on your own as you walk around your home.

The point of this exercise is to learn to think outside the box, to go beyond your known uses for everyday items. A baby is a new, creative being. That's why, to a baby, the boxes the toys come in are just as much fun as the toy itself. Their minds are open to new experiences and ideas, not caught in the fact that boxes are packaging to be thrown away.

CONCLUSION

Creativity is an attribute that can be enhanced with exercises that open the mind up to possibilities. Even if you think you are not the “creative type,” that part of your brain can be developed by exercising it. For many, it doesn't come easy until they start exploring it, then creativity and ideas start to flow freely.

**Creativity is an attribute that can
be enhanced with exercises that
open the mind up to possibilities.**

Facing page—Look at how the addition of a simple blanket frames the baby's face and adds texture and visual interest. The result is a timeless portrait that cost almost nothing to create. **Left**—Pick up a wide variety of fabrics from the fabric store to instantly boost your creative options. **Right**—Don't force little boys to play with trucks or other more “masculine” props if they're more interested in cuddly stuffed animals. Making this little guy comfortable with a few of his chosen props resulted in an expression with real feeling.





8. DIGITAL ARTISTRY WITH COREL PAINTER

Digital imaging programs can be used to create artful portraits that differentiate your studio from the competition. There are many programs you can use to enhance your images, but to my mind, the best is Corel® Painter®.

The effects achieved with Corel Painter are not created using filters or keystrokes that automatically impart an effect. Instead, this program allows the user to completely control the tools to produce unique, highly artistic results that are anything but cookie-cutter and fully automated.

This chapter is intended as a speed course in using the program to produce outstanding images with little effort—and in no time at all.

Facing page—The Acrylics>Captured Bristle, Blenders>Grainy Water, and Soft Blender Stump 20 brushes were used to create this image. Increasing the saturation boosted the impact of the image. Also, I cloned a version of the image, maximized the saturation, and saved it with a new name so that it would appear in the Clone Source list. This allowed me to use it as a secondary clone source. (To change the clone source, go to File>Clone Source and make a new selection.) **Below**—The Welcome screen for Corel Painter.

JUST ADD WATER

Our first technique will show you just how easy it is to create a fabulous, artful image from a great original, allowing you to provide your clients with





This screenshot shows the way the interface looks when it is first opened. It may appear intimidating, but it's very easy to work with. Just follow the simple steps outlined in this chapter to discover some of the many uses for this software.



This screenshot shows where to find the brushes and the categories they are in. Blenders is the name of this category, and Just Add Water is the brush choice in that category.

the opportunity to purchase two images, each with a very different feel. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Go to File>Open and select the image you wish to work on.
2. Go to File>Clone to create a copy of the original image. Note that Painter automatically assigns a new file name (Clone of [file name]) to the duplicated image. You may minimize the original image, but it must remain open to be used as a clone source.
3. Select the Brush tool from the toolbox. (If the toolbox is not visible, go to Window>Show Toolbox.)
4. Select the Blenders category via the Brush Selector Bar. (Just pull down on the arrow to the left of the Brush Category icon. If this window is not visible, you can make it active by selecting Window>Show Brush Selector Bar.) Next, you can click on the gray bar at the right side of the Brush Variant icon and select Just Add Water.
5. From the Property Bar at the top of the screen, choose a brush size that suits the detail you want to paint over in the image. Note that you can also play with the opacity to suit your tastes. (Select Window>Show Property Bar if the menu is not visible.) With the brush settings in place, you can now simply “smoosh” the background to create a painterly image.
6. When you’re satisfied with the image, save your work (File>Save) and close Painter (File>Close).

Top—Original image. **Bottom**—Using the Just Add Water brush option, you can easily create a brand-new image effect based on your original image.

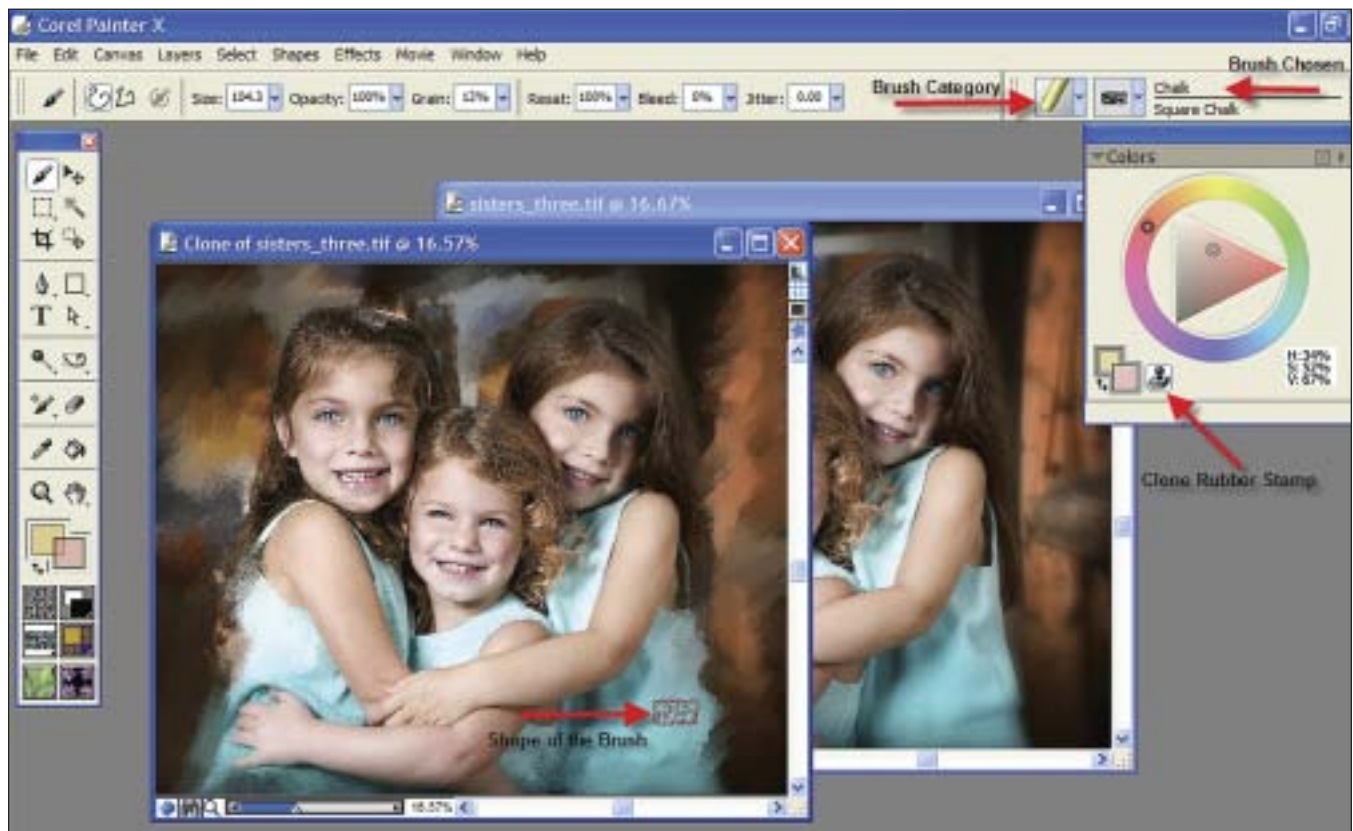


CLONED BACKGROUNDS

Another way to create a painterly background in your image is to use a Cloner brush to paint color information from the clone source onto the destination image. You can select the desired media (e.g., chalk, felt pen, oil, etc.), then set the desired “brush” size and opacity. You can also choose the direction of the strokes. This is a simple process that yields a highly artistic effect.

1. Go to File>Open and select the image you wish to work on.
2. Go to File>Clone to create a copy of the original image. You may minimize the original image, but it must stay open in Painter to be used as a Clone Source.
3. Select the Brush tool from the toolbox. (If the toolbox is not visible, go to Window>Show Toolbox.)
4. Select Chalk from the Brush Category. Click on the right edge of the Brush Variant icon. (If this window is not visible, you can make it active by selecting Window>Show Brush Selector Bar.)
5. Go to Windows>Show Colors to open the Color palette if it is not visible. Click on the Clone Colors (rubber stamp) icon so the brush will act as a cloner. Note that when the icon is selected, the Color palette colors appear faded.
6. From the Property Bar at the top of the screen, choose a brush size that suits the detail you want to paint over in the image. The smaller the

Another way to create a painterly background in your image is to use a Cloner brush. . . .



Click on the rubber stamp icon in the bottom-left corner of the Colors palette, then click on the color wheel. When you begin painting on your image, the Chalk tool will apply the original color of the background.

brush size, the more detail it will show. Note you can also play with the opacity to suit your tastes. (Select Window>Show Property Bar if the menu is not visible.) You are now ready to apply the chalk-like effect to your image.

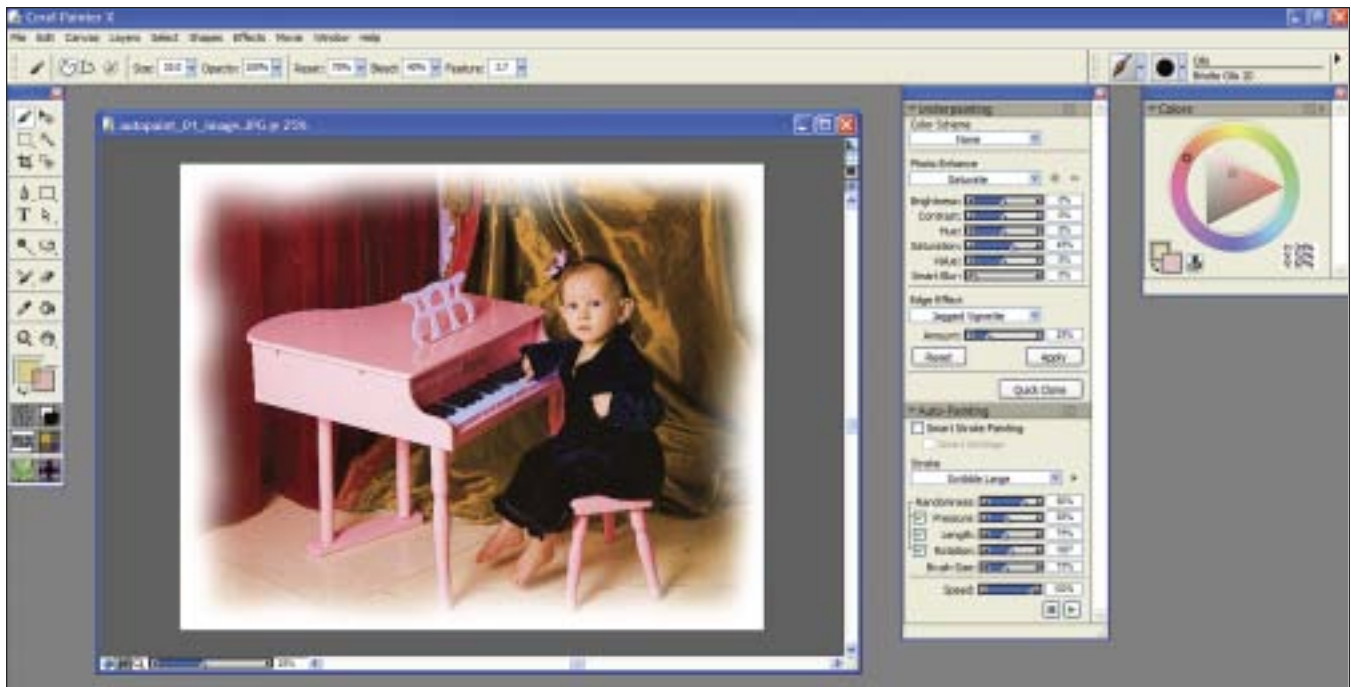
7. When the image results suit you, simply save (File>Save As) and close (File>Close) the image. It is strongly recommended that you rename the new file at this point. Otherwise, you'll eventually find yourself with numerous files that begin with "clone of."

AUTO-PAINTING

The painting process can be automated using the incredible Auto-Painting feature in Painter. Auto Painting was introduced in version Painter 9.5 and at the same time was also introduced into Painter Essentials 3, which is the "light" version of Painter with far fewer options or brushes. Painter X is the most sophisticated and complete version of Auto-Painting that Corel has introduced. It has many enhancements and can quickly create beautiful



This original image will take on an entirely new look when the Auto-Painting effect is applied.

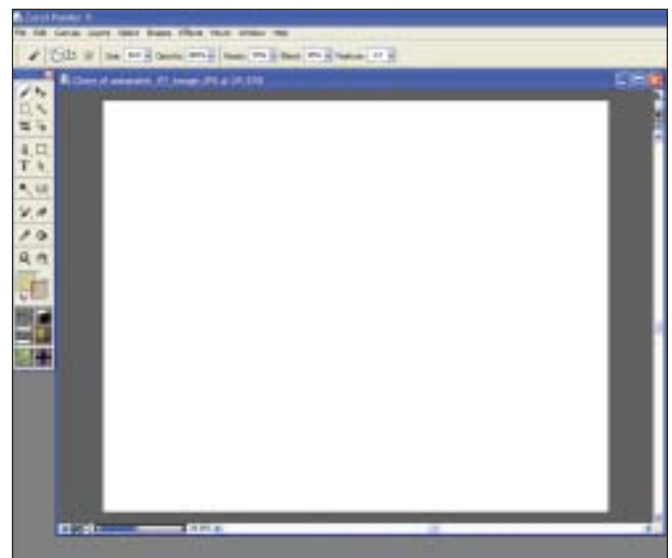
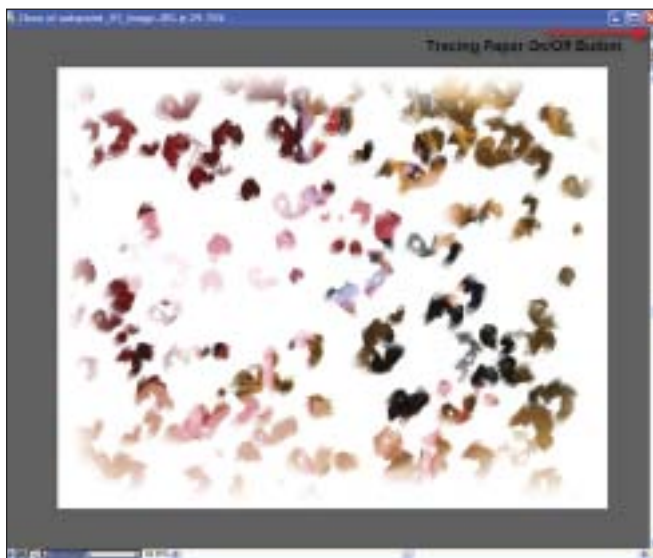
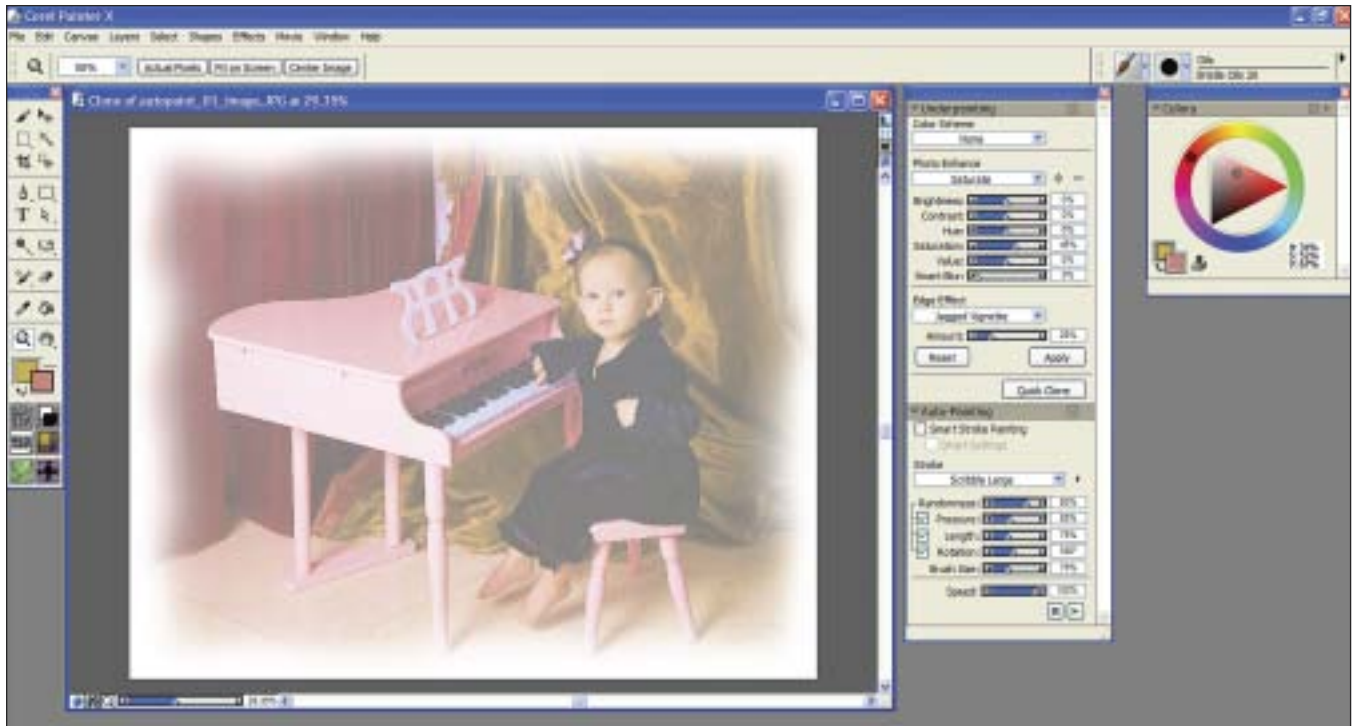


This screenshot shows the palettes used in the Auto-Painting process.

underpaintings of your images. (As the name implies, an underpainting is a layer that is painted over.) The colors of the underpainting can be mingled with or show through the final painting. After the underpainting is done, it's easy to paint the details yourself by hand to finish the painting.

1. Go to File>Open and select the image you wish to paint.
2. Go to File>Clone to create a copy of the original image. You may minimize the original image, but it must stay open in Painter to be used as a Clone Source.
3. Go to Window>Show Underpainting. We'll now work from the top to the bottom of the palette to fill in the various fields with settings that will allow you to produce your desired painting effect.
4. In the Color Scheme field, select None (default setting). After becoming familiar with the steps for Auto-Painting, you might want to experiment with the Color Scheme settings and see what each one will do to your painting.
5. In the Photo Enhance field, select Saturate. Choosing a higher saturation setting will produce warm skin tones and more vivid colors across the overall image. When the image comes back from the lab, you'll have a more realistic painterly result.
6. In the Edge Effect field, select Jagged. As you gain experience, go back and experiment with the other selections. Below the Edge Effect field you'll see an Amount slider. You can slide it to the left or right until your image shows the effect you're looking for. You'll also see the percentage change in the field to the right of the slider.
7. Click on the Quick Clone button under the Edge Effect field. You will see a duplicate of your image, but it will appear as if it is under tracing paper. It is!

**The colors of the underpainting
can be mingled with or show
through the final painting.**



Top—This is how the image will look after it is Quick Cloned—as if it is under tracing paper. **Above left**—By turning the tracing paper off and on you can see how the image is being automatically painted. If the On/Off button is pressed again, the image will be visible, and the painting process will be more difficult to observe. **Above right**—The image to be painted has been turned off, and only the tracing paper shows.

8. In the Stroke field, select Scribble Large. Set the Pressure, Length, Rotation, and Brush Size as shown in the screenshot above, or play with the settings until you achieve the desired effect.
9. Select Oils from the Brush Category, then select Bristle Oils 20 under the Brush Variant icon. (If this window is not visible you can make it active by selecting Window>Show Brush Selector Bar.) Be sure the rubber stamp is depressed in the Color palette so the color wheel appears faded.

10. Turn off the image appearing through the tracing paper by clicking on the little box in the upper-right corner just above the blue and white grid box.
11. Click Play (green arrow) at the bottom of the Auto-Painting palette and let the painting feature run until the image looks good, then click Stop (square button), touch your stylus to the Wacom tablet, or click on the image. Any of these options will halt the painting process.
12. You can then click on the Brush icon in the toolbox to manually paint in any details. The same brush that was used for Auto-Painting will be available. To paint in details, choose a smaller brush size in the Brush Control bar.
13. When the image results suit you, simply save (File>Save) and close (File>Close) the image. It's a good idea to rename the image.

You can find a wealth of online information on Painter by doing a simple search. My own site, www.digitalpaintingforum.com, is a great place to start learning more about this versatile, easy-to-use program.



Top—A close-up of the brushwork shows how painterly it is. **Above**—The finished painting after the details are painted in by hand.

The Acrylics>Captured Bristle brush was used to add color to this image, and Blenders>Grainy Water was used to blend the added colors with the existing colors in the photograph.



**There's a joy that comes from
using digital imaging software to
take your images to the next level.**

THE EDUCATED CLIENT

Because most of the general public does not understand the concept of painting digitally, there is often a misconception that a "button was pushed" to do the work for us. It is important to explain to your clients that every brushstroke and decision is made by you, the artist. One way to do this is to record each step of the painting process as you work on a given image. You can use a video camera to make an educational video for your clients. You can also use software to create a screen capture presentation about Painter, complete with music. (Consider SnagIt or Camtasia Studio [www.techsmith.com] or, if you're working with a Mac, SnapzProX2 [www.ambrosiasw.com]). The video can be played during your sales presentation or possibly put on your website.

CONCLUSION

Though your portraits and images may be beautiful right out of the camera, there's a joy that comes from using digital imaging software to take your images to the next level. By applying painterly effects to your images in post-production, you can build your client base and increase your profits.

9. POPULAR PLUG-INS

Plug-in filters are some of the most powerful digital imaging tools available to photographers. These small accessory programs are user-friendly, too. You can run this software with a host program, like Adobe Photoshop, and easily load it, upgrade it, or remove it without affecting the host program. These filters tend to be inexpensive, so feel free to collect a wide array and enhance your options for editing your images or adding special effects!

Plug-ins can be used alone to produce subtle to outrageous image effects, but you can maximize your options by using them in tandem with Adobe Photoshop or Corel Painter.

Nik Software offers a fabulous collection of plug-in filters that can be used to produce a wide variety of toning effects or other interesting artistic enhancements. The following examples illustrate how we use plug-ins to amplify the painterly images created in Painter.

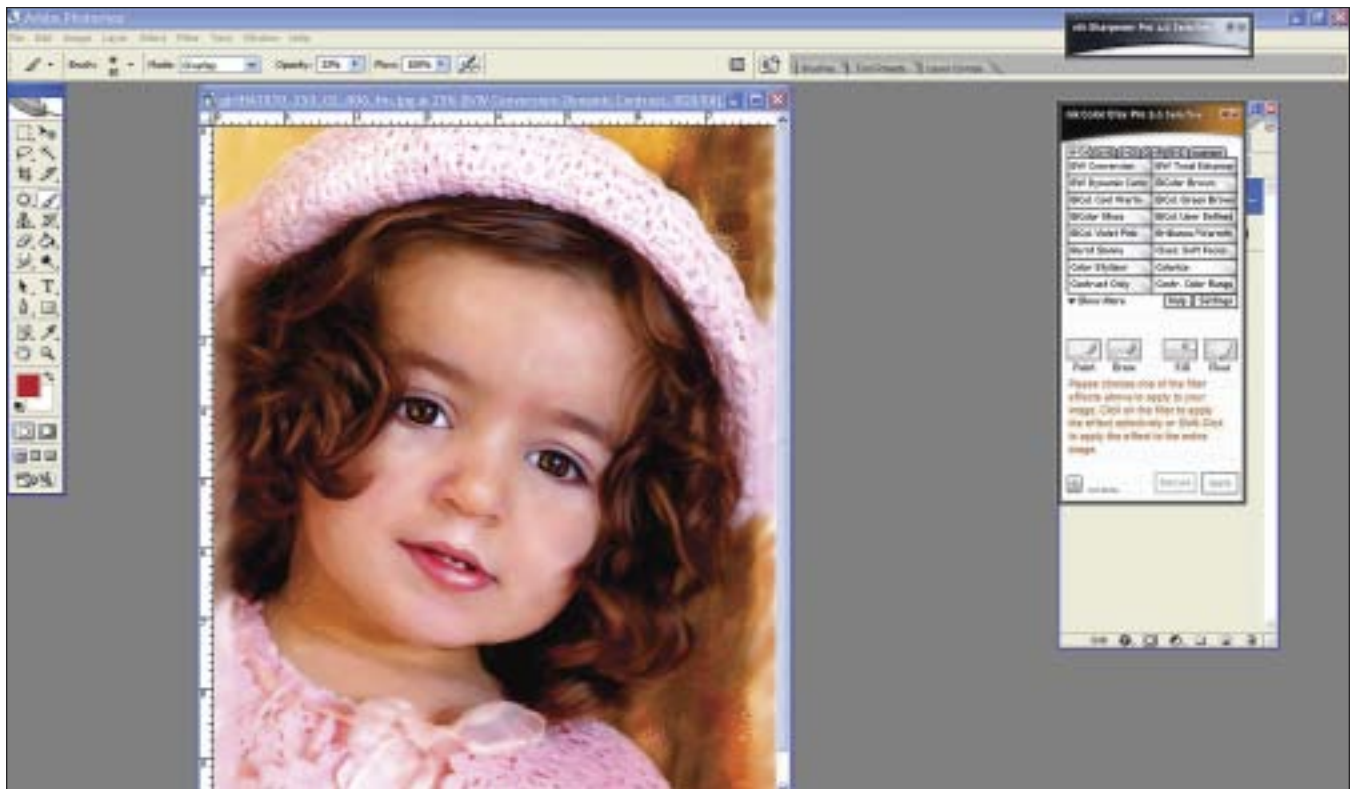
BLACK & WHITE CONVERSION FOR A SUBDUED EFFECT

You can create a more subdued version of a painterly image by using the BW Conversion filter from Nik Software. Here's how it's done:

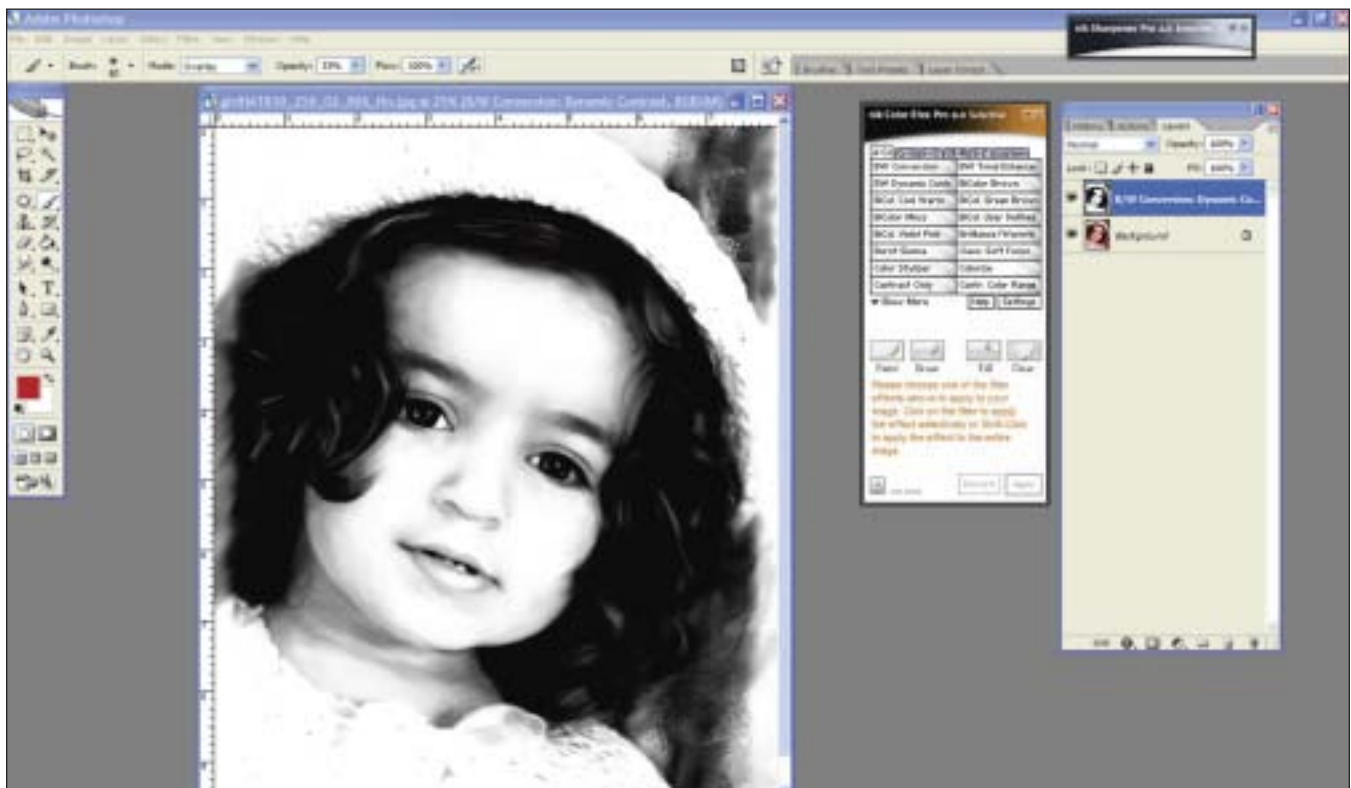
1. Open an image in Photoshop.
2. Duplicate the layer (Layer>Duplicate Layer).
3. Go to Nik Filter>BW Conversion Dynamic Contrast.
4. After selecting the filter, click Apply.

The original painted image can be subdued somewhat to produce another saleable image.





Click on BW Dynamic Contrast in the Nik filter palette.



Once you click on the Apply button, the image will appear in black & white.



5. Choose Fill.
6. In the Layers palette, reduce the opacity to the desired amount.
7. Click Apply in the Nik dialog box.
8. When the effect suits you, go to File>Save As, assign a new file name, and click Save.

The final image is shown on the facing page. As you can see, using this effect produced an image with a very different, softer feel.

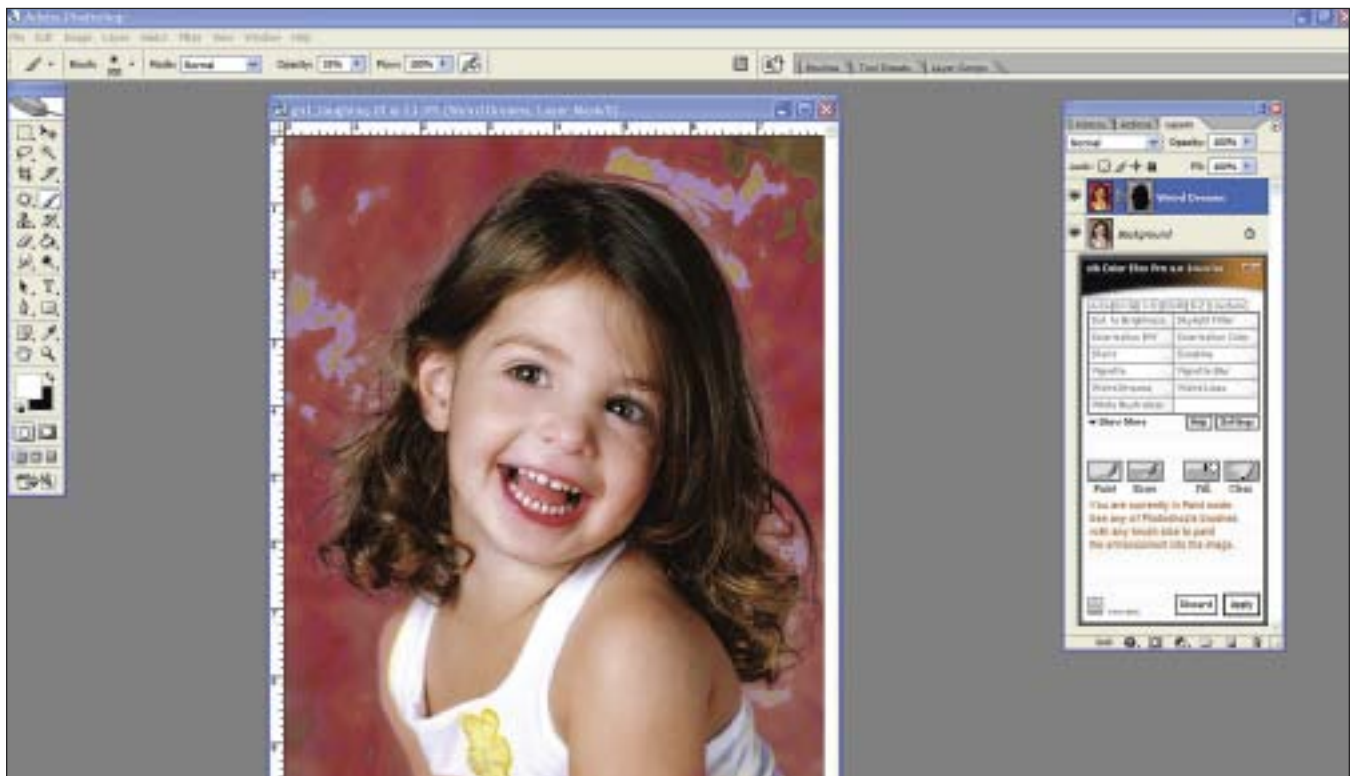


Above—In the Layers palette, reduce the opacity to achieve the desired effect. **Facing page**—The semi-opaque layer allows some of the color of the original to show through for a completely different image effect.

WEIRD DREAMS

To create a great background effect in your image, consider using another Nik filter called Weird Dreams.

1. Open the image in Photoshop.
2. Duplicate the layer (Layer>Duplicate Layer).
3. Go to Nik Filter>Weird Dreams.
4. After selecting the filter, click Apply.
5. In the Color Set drop-down menu, choose a color.
6. Click OK.
7. Choose the Paint Brush icon and paint in the filter effect where you want it.
8. Click Apply.
9. When the effect suits you, go to File>Save As, assign a new file name, and click Save.



CONCLUSION

There are a wide array of plug-ins available from a variety of manufacturers. Some can be used to create a range of traditional photographic effects, and others can impart interesting pop-art effects. Still others can be used to create interesting edge or framing effects. Nik Software is a favorite, and Alien Skin and AutoFX produce some plug-ins that many photographers enjoy. A simple web search can enlighten you about the myriad effects available at your fingertips. Consider using a trial download to see if a product you are considering suits your needs.

For a more detailed look at plug-ins, see *Plug-ins for Adobe® Photoshop®: A Guide for Photographers* by Jack and Sue Drafahl (Amherst Media, 2004).

Top—Here is a basic portrait with a wonderful expression but a boring background. **Above**—Using Nik Software's Weird Dreams filter, the background can be painted in without affecting the rest of the image. **Facing page**—Here's the final image. The options are endless with these versatile filters.



10. MARKETING THAT WORKS

Targeted marketing is smart marketing, an investment of time and money that will get results. Though it may be tempting to conduct mass mailings to every residence in your general area, it's a waste of time and money. To get the biggest return on the time and money you spend, you'll need to do a little research and planning.

One of the key points to consider before starting any marketing campaign is that you must tailor your approach to the demographic you're after. It's senseless to mass mail postcards and brochures to people who have no need for your services. On the other hand, it's reasonable to think that sending postcards to referrals and people on your current client list will work.

Targeted marketing is smart marketing, an investment of time and money that will get results.



Left—Keep your clients in the loop about seasonal promotions. **Facing page**—Producing images your clients cherish and ensuring top-notch customer service will ensure great word-of-mouth referrals.



A photograph of a baby sitting on a sandy surface, possibly a beach. The baby is wearing a light green, plush robe with a white trim and a large white bow at the waist. The baby is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greyish-blue.

Never underestimate the power of good word of mouth advertising about your studio and photography. One happy client will send you many referrals.

Below, we'll take a look at the pros and cons of the most popular marketing campaigns.

E-MAIL

An e-mail campaign offers many advantages: it costs nothing but your time, can be easily updated, and can be targeted directly to past customers, referrals, and those likely to be interested in your products.

I use e-mail to communicate with my clients. It is an easy way to spread the news about a promotion or just to remind your clients that the holidays are coming up and the portrait appointments are filling up fast. It is also a great way to keep your customers up to date with news about the studio or awards you may have received.

You can also use e-mail to let your clients know you appreciate their business. Consider the following:

1. Let your clients know they are in your thoughts. Many sites offer free, personalized e-cards (you can often upgrade the selection for a couple

- of dollars). Check out www.e-cards.com or www.bluemountain.com for some ideas.
2. You can also e-mail clients gift certificates to a wide variety of e-stores. Websites like www.amazon.com and www.giftcertificates.com, among others, are sure to be a hit with your clients. A gift certificate to www.itunes.com is a great gift that kids and teens will appreciate.
 3. Consider sending a gift subscription to the online version of the *Wall Street Journal* or *New York Times*.

DIRECT MAIL

A direct mail campaign is expensive. It can take a great deal of time and money to design the mailers and address each piece. Of course, the postage rates and the time it takes to reach prospective clients are drawbacks as well. Also, these pieces must be frequently updated and reprinted so that they do not appear out of date. Finally, repeat mailing are often required to draw a new client. Statistics show that clients are much more likely to respond to your third mailing than to your first.

EXPANDING YOUR REACH

Never assume that everyone has a desire for your product. Market directly to the clients who have money to spend and a desire for your product. Try to identify potential clients that have an interest in family issues or the arts, have ties to the right charities, and are supportive of small businesses and their growth. You can also selectively mail your marketing materials to people in a given neighborhood or zip code. Simply go to www.whitepages.com and click Reverse Lookup. You can enter a street, city, and state and get the names of the residents.



Consider sending a personalized e-card before your client's children's birthday; you'll likely remind them to book a session to commemorate the event.

NETWORKING

This option is financially inexpensive, but it costs your time and energy to show up to events, serve on committees, get involved in the community, visit stores, and build relationships that last. This is the most time intensive marketing strategy, but it's the most effective option. Follow-up on personal networking is essential to its success.

WORD OF MOUTH

Never underestimate the power of good word of mouth advertising about your studio and photography. One happy client will send you many referrals. By providing your clients with some of your business cards, printed with a portrait from their child's session, you'll make it easy to ensure that your clients will spread the word about your services. Also consider giving your clients a free set of wallet-sized prints, printed with your contact information, with their every order. When you receive a referral from a client, be sure to thank them with additional prints, a phone call, or a thank-you gift.

WEBSITES

The Internet is a perfect vehicle for showing your work and giving potential clients a tremendous amount of information about you. Your website should be professional and easy to navigate. You should also ensure that your contact information (phone number, e-mail link, and address) appears on your



Facing page and right—Keep your website images up to date to ensure that viewers are aware of the kind of images you offer.



When my clients do a web search
for me, they gain insight into who
I am as a portrait photographer.

home page so that clients don't have to jump through hoops in order to reach you.

Glaring Omissions. In this business, it pays to learn from the mistakes of others. In viewing hundreds of professional photographers' websites, I've found the same problems again and again. Many sites feature long-loading home pages with animated graphics, no location (city and state) on the site, and long-winded contact information requests. Also, many photographers are buying and using website layout templates, resulting in a cookie-cutter look. Finally, music can be a huge distraction to viewing a website. If you must use music, have a clearly marked Off button so the viewer can disable the soundtrack.

The Game Plan. My Internet marketing strategy involves a variety of sites, each with a specific purpose and a particular target market. The combination of these sites gives a well-rounded web presence. When my clients do a web search for me, they gain insight into who I am as a portrait photographer, but they also learn about my art products and my business and

recognize my commitment to my clients and to the industry. Needless to say, it also enhances my credibility. Below is a summary of each of these sites and the purpose of each.

www.marilynsholin.com

This is a general landing page where all my sites can be accessed from one place. If there is an Internet search for my name, this is the first site most people will go to, and from there they can go to any of my other sites. This has given us a strong presence and lets anyone looking for me find out the different sides to my business. My portrait clients many times purchase my fine art for gifts and my fine art clients who have purchased originals from me will call for personal portrait commissions.

www.marilynsholinportraits.com

This site is geared toward prospective portrait clients. It serves as an online brochure and features my contact information, some personal information, image galleries, and information on clothing, hair, and makeup for portraits. There's just enough biographical information provided to help clients understand more about me. All of the information is presented in a simple format, and a quick flash animation opening adds a little pizzazz.

www.marilynsholinfineart.com

This is my newest and most complicated site. It's a full shopping site through which visitors can purchase my artwork as posters, prints, and gift items. Commercial clients are drawn to this site, and stock sales are managed through this site as well.

This secure site allows visitors to make purchases via PayPal or a credit card. When creating a site with all the bells and whistles, hire a respected and experienced web designer to have your site secured and protect your buyers' information. We use the website design services of Shirley Lund (www.lundandlund.net). Shirley has built all our websites and taught me how to manage the back end of them with her help. Though I hired a pro to design the site, I can now update the text and images myself.

marilyn.blogsome.com

This address is home to my personal blog (short for "web log"), a place where I can share my successes, travel stories, restaurant reviews, and any other personal information in a warm and friendly tone. The blog is probably the most fun to work on and update. I get many, many e-mails from the blog, and it always surprises me to see how many people read it over and over.

www.digitalpaintingforum.com

This site was launched to provide a forum about digital painting. I thought it would be a great idea to have all of my digital painting information in one place. Little did I suspect that in one year's time that forum would have twenty-five hundred members and forty-five thousand posts. This site has a personality of its own. I host and monitor the site myself and update it almost daily. Members also receive a special newsletter devoted to digital painting.



Your website is a perfect vehicle for showing prospective clients the variety of products and services you offer.

Consider creating a mailing list targeted to the clients who show an interest in family portraits and send a special offer for portraits they can't resist.



**I can develop a new mailing list
targeted to the clients who showed
interest in family portraits.**

TARGETED MAILINGS

We publish a newsletter that's geared specifically to the target client groups served by each website. When a prospective client signs up as a guest on our website, the newsletter is sent immediately to that visitor's e-mail address. We also routinely send out messages, reminders, and postcards, which can be easily designed using templates.

We hired a company called Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) to manage our bulk e-mailing. The company is essentially the cheapest employee on my staff. Constant Contact also tracks interest in each product we promote on our various websites. They also provide us with a list of the viewers who click on the links in our e-mails, and can even tell us what time the recipients clicked on the link, and how many times they accessed the link.

With this information, I can develop a new mailing list targeted to the clients who showed interest in family portraits and send a special offer for portraits they can't resist. Now that's smart marketing!

CONCLUSION

Creating a few well-thought-out marketing campaigns is a much more effective way to grow your business than simply taking great pictures. Increasing your visibility in your community and nurturing the personal relationships with the people you meet will help you to realize your business goals!

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

One way to make your presence known in your community is to make an appearance at community events. Rather than donating a free portrait session and an 8x10-inch print as a door prize at a charity-sponsored event, donate an auction item (never a door prize!). Make a sizable donation that sets you apart as a platinum donor so that your name stands out in the evening's program and is not lost among the tens or hundreds of lower-end donors. Also consider providing the organization with beautiful thank-you notes or seating cards. Just make sure your name and web address appear on these items so that you can easily attract new clients. You might also offer your artwork as decor in exchange for a mention in their published thank-you list for your generous donation.

11. THE PRESENTATION

You've made it through the session, and the images look great. Now what? Fortunately, professional photographers today have a wide variety of proofing options. We'll look at the pros and cons of the various methods below.

TRADITIONAL PROOFS

For years, photographers everywhere presented their images using paper proofs. They sent their film to the lab and had small prints made from each frame of the negatives. Then the proofs were shown to the client, and decisions were made as to which poses the client wanted prints of and which sizes they desired.

While many photographers still utilize this proofing method, newer methods have been devised to show portraits. One of the main reasons for these innovations is that once the proofs are in your client's hands, it's hard to get them to order. Invariably, they want to take the proofs home and keep them for weeks in order to get opinions from everyone they know—people who, honestly, just don't count. A client needs a professional opinion and professional help to choose their portraits, not the opinions of friends who don't understand how the portraits may be ordered, framed, or presented in a collage or grouping.

The second reason why more and more photographers are turning away from using traditional proofs is that, with today's computer equipment, it is easy to make copies of proofs, and the client might use them to create very low-quality portraits. There is nothing worse than having your work reproduced and seen by others in the worst possible quality when your intention was to create beautiful, rich-looking portraits.

A third reason to not use proofs is the cost involved. Proofs are not cheap when you need to create many images, and to truly capture the many unique expressions of babies and young children, you must shoot a lot of frames. Nowadays it has become cost prohibitive to print every image captured during the session.

DIGITAL PROOFS

Digital proofing is the favored presentation method of many studio owners. When creating digital proofs, you have several options.

One option is to create your own digital proofs. If you have a secure website, you can conduct online proofing of the images. Simply assign your

Nowadays it has become cost prohibitive to print every image captured during the session.

Facing page—An emotion-filled image is sure to evoke an emotional response in the viewer. By showing your client the images from their child's session, you can take the time to reinforce the special qualities of each image. The high key background and clothing make the subject's face the darkest part of the image and draws the viewer's eye.





When you present a series of images like these, suggest multiple-image frames to ensure bigger profits.

clients a unique password that allows them to access the images from their child's session. They can view the poses, select their favorites, and place an order using a PayPal account or a credit card.

A second option is to prepare digital proofs and present them via a digital slideshow. A simple digital slideshow can be created and e-mailed to your client, or you can allow your clients to view it on your website (contact www.slide.com). More complicated slideshows can be created using the software available at www.photodex.com. Note that taking the time to conduct a proofing session with each of your clients will yield higher sales than will leaving them to view and purchase their images on your website. Consequently, at my studio, all proofing is handled in person.

Finally, you can retouch your images and add any desired special effects, then upload your images to a professional lab like www.collages.net, which will host your proofs, take orders, and process your sales (for a price).

Whenever you are posting your images online, it is a good idea to password protect your images and set a length of time for them to be viewed. This is the way to protect your image, your clients confidentiality. Most companies that provide proofing services provide this protection free of charge.

Whatever the method, digital proofing offers a clear advantage: you can easily expand your viewing audience by encouraging the client's friends and family to visit the website, review your images, and place their own orders for your portraits or photo gift items.

Nowadays it has become cost prohibitive to print every image captured during the session.

This perfect portrait was created by standing back and letting the action unfold. The resulting expression is priceless.



You'll find that your sales will increase when you take the time to show your clients their images.

PROJECTION

Projection is still a great way to show your images to clients. You will need a digital projector connected to your computer or laptop and you can then project your images on large screens or walls for your clients to choose from. You can also project the images into frames to create add-on frame sales.

CONCLUSION

No matter which proofing options you prefer, you'll find that your sales will increase when you take the time to show your clients their images. When viewing proofs at home, clients may be unaware of many of the options your studio offers—like frames, gift items, and special artistic enhancements, for example. By educating your clients on their options, you'll increase their level of satisfaction with your studio.

12. SALES

BASIC STRATEGIES

Many new studio owners (and even some seasoned pros) dislike the sales process. If you are a creative person, you want to spend your time creating. However, there's no denying the fact that selling is an essential part of your job.

It may help you to think of selling as the final step in the creative process. Simply visualize your finished product and then sell that vision to your clients.

The most important quality you need is enthusiasm! Be excited about your images on the phone and in person. Be thrilled with what you have created. I once heard a photographer telling a client all the negative things about an image the client was considering purchasing. The client loved the expressions on the children's faces and how cute they were cuddled up together. The photographer pointed out that he didn't straighten the clothing and that the lighting on the background could be fixed with custom printing. Then he added, "Susie's smile is better in this other image, but her arms and legs look a little skinny." After hearing that from the photographer, who is considered the professional when it comes to what looks good, the client only placed a modest order and was no longer happy with her "imperfect" images.

Your optimism about your work will result in good sales. Some things to remember when showing your work are:

1. Don't take it personally if the client doesn't love every image. That's why you are photographing a variety of poses for each client. They need a selection and, inevitably, something will not be their favorite.
2. Be a good listener. This is essential to good sales. Learning to listen patiently and to really hear your client will produce higher sales. They might mention a relative for whom they forgot to order a gift, for instance. Mainly, however, you are listening to their concerns and fears about ordering the prints. This is your moment to reassure them that they are making the right decision and, if anything is not to their liking, you will stand behind the portraits when they are finished and delivered.
3. Have a consistent system. Every time you show your portraits to a client, use the same method of display and go through the same sales

Simply visualize your finished product and then sell that vision to your clients.



Your enthusiasm about your images will affect your clients' perceptions of their portrait experience and their purchase and will keep them coming back for more.

cycle. For instance, you can present all of the images from your client's session and ask them to select all of the portraits that they may consider ordering—even if not right away. That way, you can narrow down the images to the ones they like best. After that, you might decide to help them choose their wall portrait or gift items. The system you choose may differ from the one outlined above, but that doesn't matter. What's important is that you follow the same process with every client. That way, the presentation becomes second nature and you will be better able to maintain your concentration.

4. Learn when to be quiet. The biggest mistake photographers make when selling is talking too much. Don't push the client to make snap decisions. Relax, sit back, and listen to the client speak about each portrait. Reinforce their enthusiasm about their favorites and be quiet about the ones they don't like.

5. Keep your sense of humor. Remember how silly that child was in the camera room during the photography session? Remind Mom how he made you laugh that day, and enjoy seeing her smile as she thinks about him.
6. Speaking of the children, remember to schedule the sales appointment when the children will not be around. It's hard for a parent to make decisions when their children are distracting them.

With digital photography, clients sometimes decide not to order during the presentation and ask you to put the images online. We do not do any sales of our clients' images on our portrait website. We always tell them it's better to order in person with my professional and personal help. After they have placed their order we will post a PDF of the images they've ordered online. We send the clients an e-mail containing a link to the page on which their images can be viewed, and they are free to share their password with friends and family. The e-mail also provides information as to when the images will no longer be visible. Because the client's proofs cannot be viewed online until their order has been placed, there is no delay in the sales and production process.

ADD-ONS

Frames. We have collected a number of beautiful products to sell to our clients, including picture frames.

The best way we have found to sell frames is to show them with the client's portraits already in them. If they do not desire to purchase the frame after seeing it, it's simple to remove the portraits. For many clients, a framed image is irresistible.

Portrait Collections. Because mothers and fathers treasure each one of the varied expressions captured in our images, our portrait collections have always been a great seller for us. Whether a composite image on a single print or a collection of framed prints, these collections are always a hit.

The easiest way for clients to imagine their images as a collection is to create layouts that show image col-

A multi-portrait frame is a great add-on that perfectly showcases the variety of expressions your client presents during their session.





Form vs. function? These photo bags have a lot of style, are highly personalized, and are an instant conversation piece that can lead to client referrals.

lections and collages at the client's viewing session. When they see how multiple images work together to tell a story, they are more likely to buy multiple poses.

Purses and Jewelry. Not all of your portrait products need to be displayed on your client's walls or desktops. In fact, many of our clients choose our wearable portraits—whether purses or jewelry. This is one great way to get word out about your studio, services, and products.

A few minutes searching the Internet will also find many custom jewelry pieces that can be used with portraits.



Above left and right—Jewelry boxes are one of the more innovative gift items that you can sell to your clients—and depending on the selection they can be tailored to a male or female recipient. Left—These elegant glass tiles are presented on graceful easels that will appeal to a wide variety of clients.

Other Options. There are many new items available now for product sales. Some of them that are most popular are music boxes, and glass tiles on easels. Another one is a shadowbox where the image is put onto a tile and then mounted onto a velvet mat in a glossy frame. Check the Resources chapter at the end of the book for contact information for companies that produce some of these great products.

While prints will likely comprise the bulk of your clients' purchases, don't overlook the opportunity to expand the sale with one or more of these add-on items. Be sure to display samples of each of your specialty products in



Shadowboxes are a perfect choice for a client looking for something other than a traditional frame.





your reception area and in the sales room to pique your client's interest. Most companies allow for sample purchase discounts to professionals.

CONCLUSION

Check your phone book, do an online search, or check your Sunday paper to find a venue that offers sales classes or seminars. Take as many as you can, and as often as you can. Once you spend the time required to become familiar with the sales process, you'll be much more comfortable in the role of salesperson.

Great images market themselves. With a portrait like this hanging in your client's home, you're sure to get the attention of their friends and families.

13. CUSTOMER SERVICE AFTER SALE

Many photographers fail to realize that customer service doesn't end after the session. Customer service can make or break your reputation in your community. One happy customer will tell two people. One unhappy customer will tell twenty-five. It is your job to say thank you many times over, in many different ways, to each and every client. Your clients did you the honor of purchasing your portraits. What better way to say thank you than with the gift of a few wallet-sized prints, a free print of an image they did not order but that was one of your favorites, or maybe a gift certificate good on their next portrait session? There are many ways to let your clients know you appreciate their business. These are just a few of them.

Many photographers fail to realize that customer service doesn't end after the session.

THANK-YOU NOTES

I remember when my friend bought his first sports car. It was a lifelong dream that he finally attained, and he was thrilled to drive it off the lot. Though he was very excited to buy the car, what brought him back to that same dealership three years later to update his purchase was the thank-you note he received a week after the purchase. The day he went to pick up the car, the salesman asked if he could take his picture with the car as a favor, since he likes to keep the pictures on his office wall. The thank-you note was that picture with a handwritten personal note from the salesman. What an impact that had on my friend!

The power of thank-you notes is never to be underestimated. And the more unique the thank-you note, the more memorable you will be. Some of the nicest ones can now be done on your own inkjet printer with an inexpensive scanner. Scan your favorite photo and print a few notes. In the first note, put your handwritten thank you. Give the client the other four blank note cards for their own use.

This not only creates goodwill but increases your professional visibility since the client will probably send out the other note cards to friends and family. For this reason, your studio name and phone number should be printed on the back of the note cards.

MAILINGS

There are a number of products on the market to help you more easily achieve your customer service goals. For example, you may want to send birthday cards to the children you have photographed (this is a great re-

THE CLIENT CONNECTION

Remember your clients' children's names and the names of their cousins (who you have also probably photographed). Remembering relationships between your clients is important and shows that you care about their family, not just the last portrait session.

minder to parents to update their child's photo, as well). Another item you may want to use is a customer-satisfaction card that can be sent to clients to evaluate your studio. You can also stay in touch with clients by sending them a postcard featuring one of their images (or perhaps a new portrait or product) on the front. One provider of this service is the website www.amazingmail.com; they can print and mail a custom-made postcard for you.

PHONE CALLS

Good customer service also means calling clients before making a special offer to the public and giving them their first choice of appointment times. You can also call clients just to ask how the children are. Never underestimate the value of simply saying hello. Often, when you make this call you will find

Below and facing page—Keep your services fresh in your clients' minds. Simply sending them a thank-you note with a favorite image from the session on it, or a few extra wallet-sized prints that they didn't order can remind them that it's time to schedule another session!





you have reminded them that they wanted to update their family portrait. Most years, I book my entire holiday season just by sending an e-mail newsletter, a personal e-mail, and making one phone call to the “regulars” who photograph their families every year for the holidays.

E-MAIL

The best way to keep in constant contact with your clients is to request their e-mail addresses. Holiday cards can be sent via e-mail as can announcements, newsletters, and special offers—and don’t forget to just say hello via a short e-mail once in a while. This makes it easy to maintain a personal relationship with your clients.

MAKE CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE

All of this leads up to the building of customers for life. You become part of their family, and they become part of yours. When you photograph children, it’s a sure bet you will be photographing them year after year (and probably some of their relatives, too). To see a grandmother holding her first great-grandchild is an awesome sight through the camera. It’s a moment you are sharing with her and the entire family. You can’t help but feel that you are a small part of their lives. Extend that feeling to everything you do, and your clients will return time after time.

IT’S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

We often send children birthday cards containing toy money that they can bring to the studio and exchange for gifts. The children can choose from a selection of inexpensive toys or stickers. A great website to purchase toy dollars and low-price bulk toys is www.toyconnection.com.

Stickers have always been very popular at the studio. Children love to be given a choice of them and always need more than one. During the holidays it’s nice to wrap small gifts so the children have something to open at the end of the session. It’s not so much a bribe as a gift.

CONCLUSION

Treat your clients’ babies and children like they are your own, and you will reap the same rewards you do with your own children. Yes, they can be mischievous and downright impatient sometimes, but overall, they are just little people asserting their rights. Treat these kids with respect, love, kindness, humor, and patience, and you will reap the best photography days of your career.

Facing page—When you maintain contact with your clients after the session, you increase the odds that they’ll continue to come to your studio year after year.

The best way to keep in constant contact with your clients is to request their e-mail addresses.



RESOURCES

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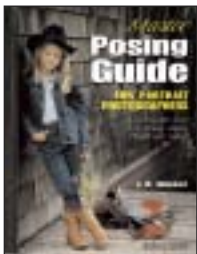
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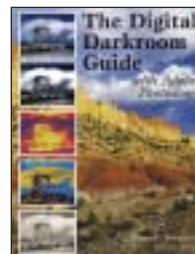
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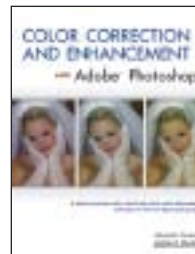
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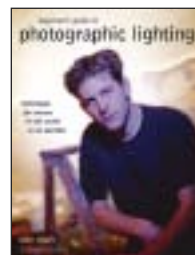
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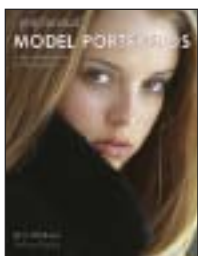
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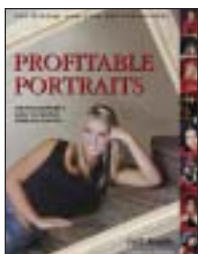
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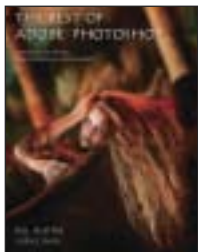
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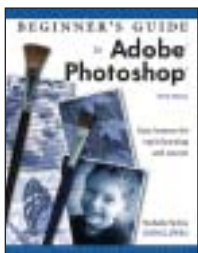


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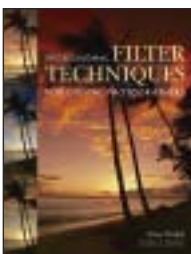
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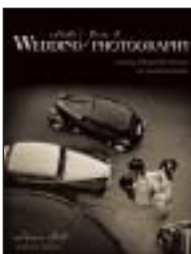
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